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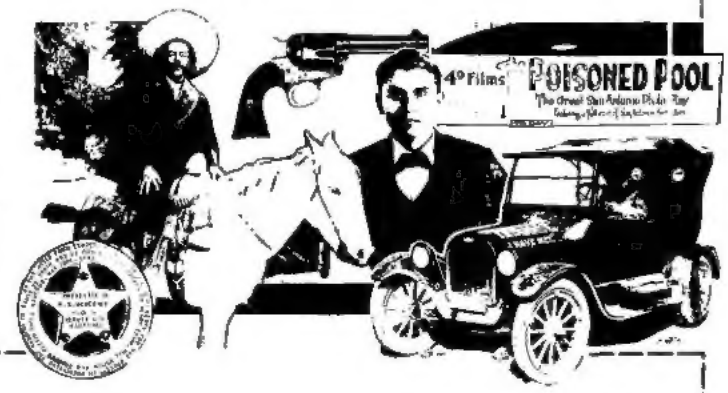

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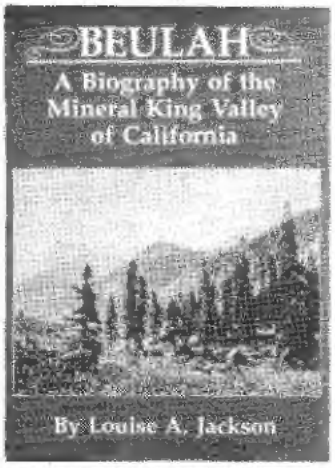

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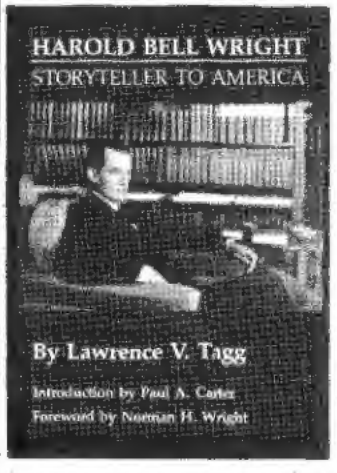

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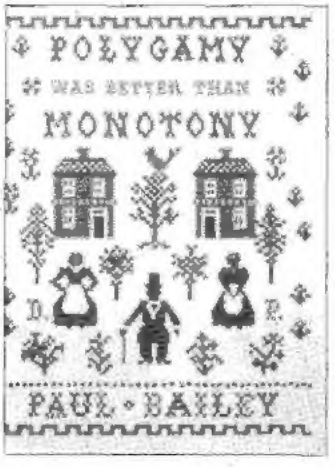

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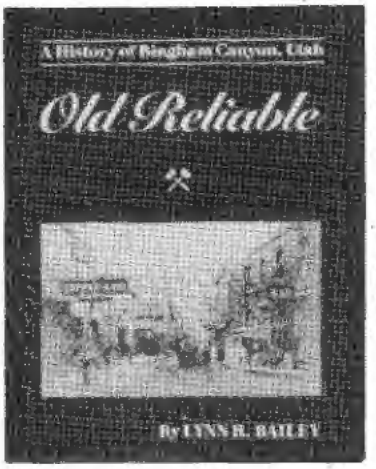

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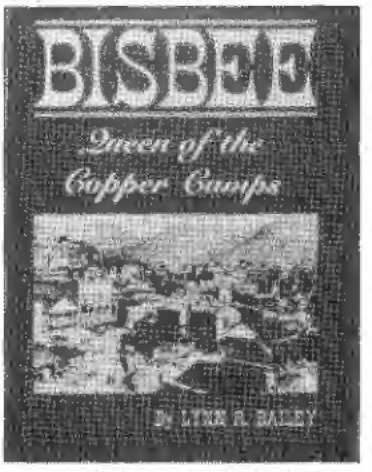

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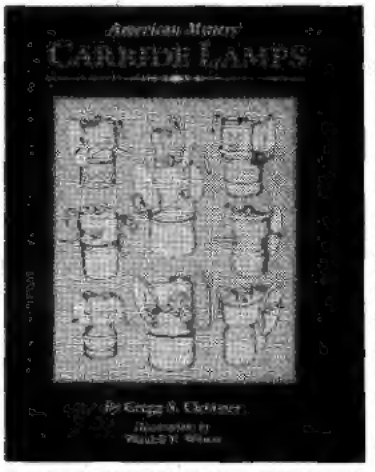

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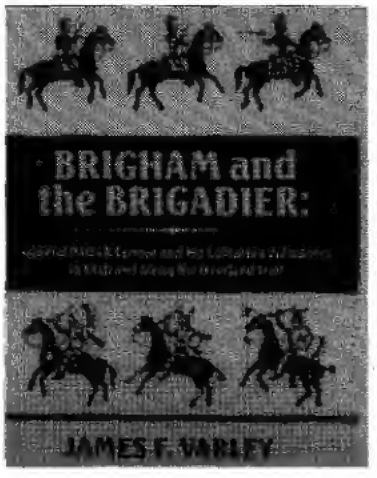

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TRUE WEST

May 1990
Vol. 37, No. 5
Whole No. 265

FEATURES

14 **Grandmother's Land: Sitting Bull in Canada. Part I, Arrival of the Warrior.** *By Bruce Wishart.* TRUE WEST begins a four-part series on the famous Sioux Indian's activities in the years following the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

21 **Saga of Old Fort Nichols.** *By Angie Irons.* Kit Carson establishes a military post on the Cimarron Cutoff, the most dangerous branch of the Santa Fe Trail.

26 **Crazy Ben Dollivar's Secret Gold Cache.** *By W.T. Block.* One of Galveston, Texas', most colorful early characters was an ex-pirate who always paid for his drinks with gold dubloons.

30 **The Olive Story.** *By Nellie Snyder Yost.* Nebraska's grisly "Man-Burner Murders" and cattleman-homesteader feud are reexamined from the ranchers' point of view.

40 **Sagebrush.** *By Steve Voynick.* Although it was universally hated by pioneers, this hardy shrub has become one of the West's most enduring symbols.

43 **The Great Wind Wagon Folly.** *By Peggy Stephenson.* Intrepid inventors attempt to harness Kansas' most plentiful natural resource to power their vehicles across the plains.

46 **Asa Mercer: Washington Territory's Matchmaker.** *By Cheryl Landes.* He may be best remembered for his involvement in Wyoming's Johnson County War, but this old-time jack-of-all-trades was once involved in the somewhat gentler pursuit of bringing women to the Northwest.

50 **Muted Mills of Como.** *By Paul Taylor.* A Nevada ghost town's ruins harbor tales of hope, riches, and Paiute Indians.

52 **When the Earth Trembled.** *By Robert M. Hyatt.* In 1811 the American wilderness was rocked by one of the most violent earthquakes in history.

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OUR COVER

Sitting Bull's first meeting with Superintendent James Morrow Walsh of the North West Mounted Police, painted by Mick Harrison.

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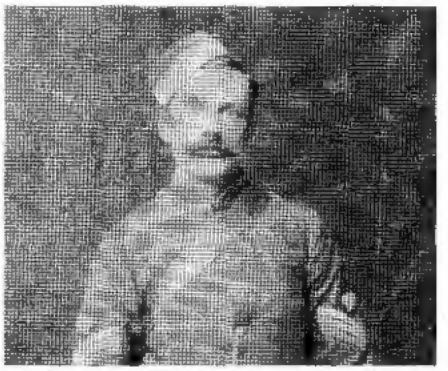

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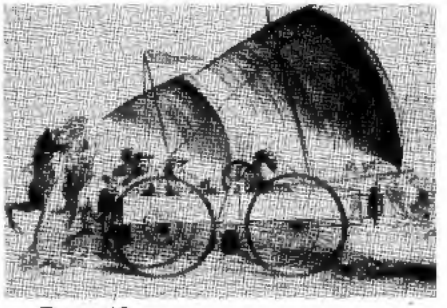

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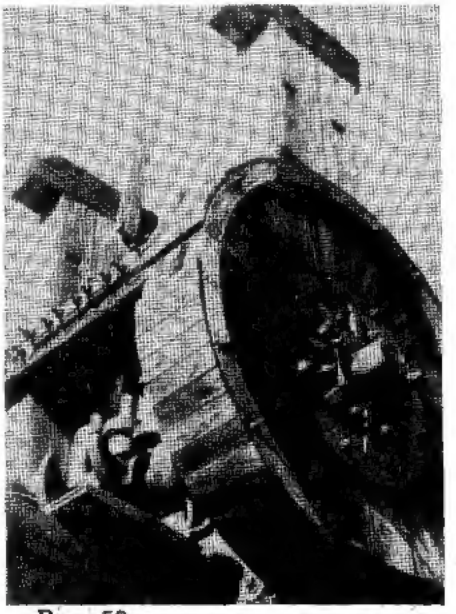

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From the Editor

Howdy, folks!

If the name James Morrow Walsh doesn't mean anything to you by now, turn to page fourteen, read part one of our new four-part series, "Grandmother's Land: Sitting Bull in Canada," by Bruce Wishart, and then come back. Time and time again, I've asked you all to read the articles in TRUE WEST first and these seventeen column inches of editorial hot air last—and then only unless you don't have anything better to do, like cleaning out the horse trailer.

But it turns out that some folks still insist on being backwards and reading my little diatribes first off. Take Mr. Bill Salzer, a fine gent who stopped by the office to say hello. He was on the way from his native state of Missouri to Tucson, Arizona, where he has staked his claim since retiring.

"Howdy," I said, and it was a good thing I did, because it soon became clear that Bill was familiar with my concerns regarding that greeting's threatened extinction.

"Howdy," he said back. After the usual how-are-you's and glad-to-meet-you's, Bill allowed as how he always reads "From the Editor" first when he gets his TRUE WEST in the mail.

"Shame on you," I said.

"Well," Bill eventually confessed, "you're a little bit younger feller than I expected."

"I'm doing my durnedest to someday become very, very old, indeed," I assured him, "and wranglin' these magazines is helpin' me right along. In the meantime, if you won't hold my relative youth and inexperience against me, I won't hold your reading habits regarding my editorials against you." At that point we drew up a treaty and Bill told me a few good yarns.

Bill and I had a nice visit, but I reckon he departed unregenerate. I'm afraid there are others, too, who are perusing these humble words right now without having read anything else in this issue. Unless you're my ma or pa, though, or else just believe in saving the best for last, t'ain't no excuse for such aberrant behavior. All I can figure is that you enjoy seeing me make a fool of myself as I wax eloquent with mind-boggling profundities on such universally significant and worthy causes as saving the word howdy, encouraging the practice and appreciation of chain saw art, or protecting the rights of pickup truck owners. But I ain't a-gonna do it. After two gray days of freezing, wind-driven rain, the skies are beautiful and blue here in central Oklahoma, and the temperature is going up. It's just too nice a day to get my dander up slinging a lot of philosophical hogwash in your direction.

Now back to James Morrow Walsh and "Grandmother's Land: Sitting Bull in Canada." I'm mighty excited about that new series, because it's a thorough account of an often neglected chapter in the history of the Sioux people. Everybody knows about the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876 and the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890, but what became of the Sioux in between times, especially when they were in Canada, is another matter. Sitting Bull and Walsh's often cat-and-mouse negotiations and Sitting Bull's reasons for finally returning to the United States make fascinating reading.

And about Walsh's hat on the cover painting: ain't it a beauty? I reckon I'll hear about that headgear if I don't explain beforehand that it's authentic. Early on when I was planning on building a magazine featuring "Grandmother's Land" on the cover, author Bruce Wishart mentioned to me that he didn't know if Walsh would have worn a helmet or a pillbox hat in the field. I passed that information on to Mick Harrison, who was doing the cover painting. In his research, Mick discovered that Walsh generally preferred a wide-brimmed, floppy, and definitely not regulation hat and probably would have been wearing it on the occasion when he met Sitting Bull. Evidently, the Mounties were about as lax regarding regulation uniforms in the field as their counterparts in the United States Cavalry.

That's the kind of historical detail that helps to keep this job interesting, and I won't even charge you extry for the information. If you all will just agree to read my editorials *after* you read the articles, I'll call it square.

John Joerschke

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Truly Western

More Pix of the Kid?

Regarding "Billy the Kid: The Photos Face Forensics," by Robert Dyer (March 1990 TRUE WEST), my maternal grandfather's sister, whose maiden name was Nancy Ann Rodabaugh, married a man name Tom McCarty. I know very little of them myself except that at one time they lived at Telluride, Colorado, and are buried in Colorado. Their grandson, a ninety-year-old bachelor, died about four years ago, and we were handed down some old photos that are copies of tintypes.

I have been a western history buff all my life, and I thought some of these pictures bore a likeness to Billy the Kid. I have, of course, seen the full-length picture of the Kid many times, as well as the one that recently showed up supposedly showing him in a suit. I would like these pictures to be included in the study, if possible.—**C.E. Overlease, 35631 Campbell Avenue, Laird, Colorado 80758.**

Editor's Note: Thanks, C.E., for sending the copies of your photos! We sent them on to the folks at the Lincoln County Heritage Trust, and they'll be included in the study.

The feller in the bust portrait bears an uncanny resemblance to the boy in the photo from the Ray John de Aragon Collection which ran on page twenty-eight of the original article. Whether they're one and the same and whether either of them is Billy the Kid are judgements which I'll leave to the experts. Until then, I reckon we'll let TRUE WEST's readers have a peek and make up their minds for themselves.

TRUE WEST reader C.E. Overlease's photographs will be included in the Lincoln County Heritage Trust's analysis of pictures said to be of Billy the Kid.

Fast on the Draw

Just wanted to let you ladies and gents know how much I appreciate your prompt service. After a year and a half of hunting around at different newsstands, sometimes without success, I decided to finally subscribe.

Well, within two weeks I received my free calendar, followed shortly by my first issue, which incidentally had my favorite Old West personality, Billy the Kid, on the cover.

I started new subscriptions to four other magazines over two months ago. I finally received my first copy of one just last week, and I'm still waiting for the others. Your response time was the fastest by far.—**Lisa Gudino, 655 Regatta Drive, Sacramento, California 95833.**

Editor's Note: Much obliged, ma'am, for the kind words! I showed your letter

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around the office, and Charlotte Brown, our subscription coordinator, is still blushing. She does get those dogies out of the chute fast!

Of course, when you're wrangling a herd the size of hers, a cantankerous critter's bound to bust loose now and again. Rounding up those spooky strays is where Charlotte really earns her dollar a day and found!

And for those of you who are still buying TRUE WEST on the newsstand, if you cain't find it, ask for it. And if the newsstand doesn't carry it, give 'em heck.

Favorite Frontier Woman

TRUE WEST is the most enjoyable material I've read in a long time. It is mind-boggling to know how people had to live, scratching out a living from Mother Earth in the 1800s, fighting the elements alone.

Klondike Kate always has been my favorite frontier woman. In "Queen of the Klondike," by John Stevenson (February 1990 TRUE WEST), Sweet Water, Oregon, is given as the place where Kate died. According to the Oregon history books, she died here in Sweet Home, Oregon. I thank you for hearing me out.—**John A. Hillman, 27640 Riggs Hill Road, Sweet Home, Oregon 97386.**

Editor's Note: And I thank you for the correction. You're right: Klondike Kate died in Sweet Home. Maybe I orter recruit Charlotte to help me with those editorial strays . . .

Okanogan County

Howdy, John. The photo of the Okanogan country on the February TRUE WEST cover is good. It's high time you gave the Northwest some recognition, as Okanogan County has always been cattle country and has a lot of good western history.

Okanogan County is larger than some of our states. A very good book about its history is *From Copenhagen to Okanogan*. It is the story of a Danish teenager who came to America and eventually became a well-known homesteader in the Okanogan country.

Other good books are *Posses to the North* by Edsen Dow and *Ben Snipes, Northwest Cattle King* by Roscoe Sheller. Ben Snipes was making cattle drives to the Cariboo mines in British Columbia, to Washington's coast, and to Montana, Idaho, and Oregon before Charlie Goodnight or Jesse Chisholm made any of their drives.

The Pacific Northwest is rich in frontier history, but writers for TRUE WEST and other western mags think the Old West ended at Wyoming and Northern California.—**Walt Thayer, P.O. Box 2175, Wenatchee, Washington 98807.**

Editor's Note: You're right, pard, about the Northwest's wealth of frontier history. But if you think we've been neglecting the Northwest, you've been reading somebody else's rags. We've run a passel of good articles on the Northwest and have plenty more in the works.

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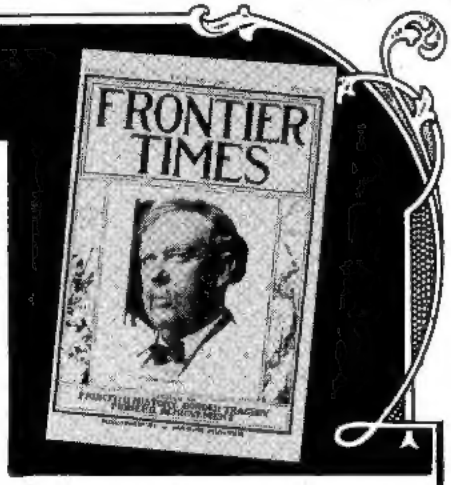

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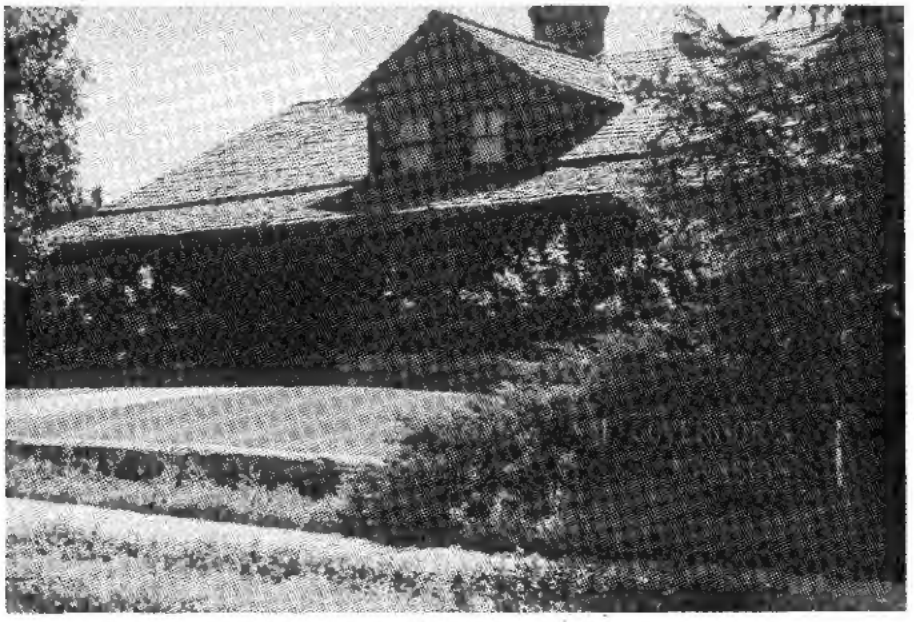
A Mansion in More Than Name

By JOHN LEGG

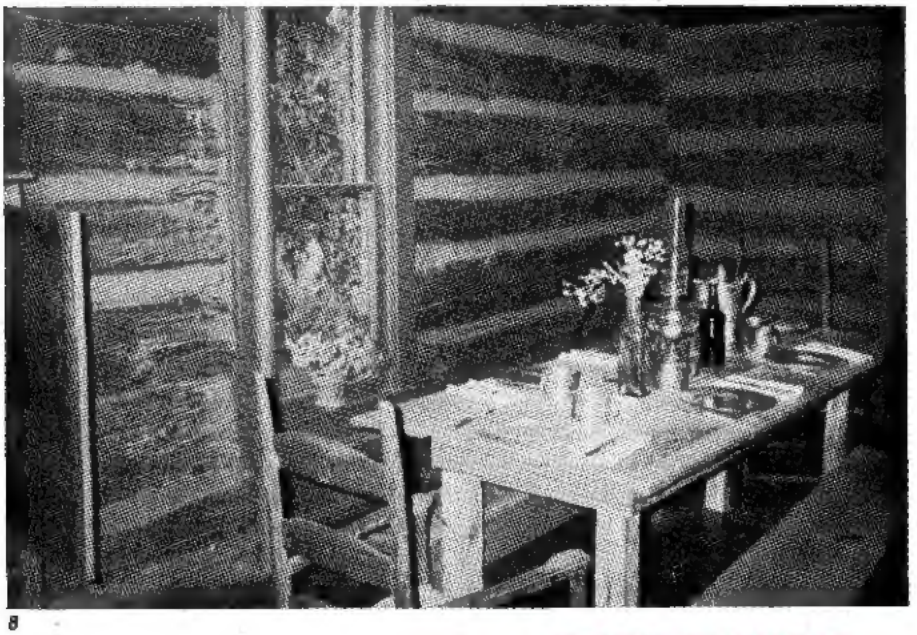
Arizona's original "Governor's Mansion" is a mansion in name only. But within its log walls took place all the important work of Arizona Territory's first decades. Inside this prepossessing little building in Prescott, the direction of the land that was to become the state of Arizona was set.

The governor's mansion is the centerpiece of the Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott. Simply a large log cabin, the mansion was built where it now stands in 1864. It served as home and offices for the territory's first governor, John Goodwin, and the territorial secretary, Richard McCormick.



Author's Photos

The governor's mansion is one of several buildings on the grounds of the Sharlot Hall Museum. The dining room (below), like the rest of the building, is furnished with items from territorial days.



The mansion is now divided into six rooms: the dining room; bachelors' quarters; the governor's office; McCormick's bedroom; the west room; and the "bride's room," used by McCormick's wife during her all-too-short stay here. (Margaret McCormick, nee Hunt, died in childbirth at age twenty-four in 1867, just a year and a half after marrying Richard.)

The west room is a tribute to Sharlot Hall. Hall came to Arizona from Kansas in 1882 at age twelve. Fascinated by this wild land, she soon took up its study and began collecting artifacts from the area's historic and prehistoric eras. As an adult she moved to California to write for *Land of Sunshine*, later becoming the magazine's associate editor. By 1909, Hall was back in Arizona Territory as its historian, a position she held for two years.

In 1928 Hall founded the museum that bears her name. The governor's mansion had, over the years, decayed and been rebuilt. Hall moved her collection of artifacts into the mansion and convinced other territorial residents, particularly those from the Prescott area, to contribute money and memorabilia. She died in 1943, but the historical society continued her work—and does to this day.

Several mannequins add color to the displays in the mansion, including one of an infantry captain, circa 1865, and one depicting Mrs. McCormick, circa 1866. Among the artifacts are furniture from various periods of the mansion's early days, guns, lanterns, clothing, jewelry, photographs, and numerous other objects representing life in Arizona Territory from its creation to statehood in 1912.

Just a few feet from the mansion is the John C. Frémont house. This fine

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house of planks, rather than logs, was built in 1875, only eleven years after Prescott's founding. Its relative opulence shows how rapidly the town had grown in that time.

Frémont lived in the house while he was territorial governor from 1878 to 1881. Its furnishings and artifacts date from 1875 to 1890.

The William C. Bashford house was built two years after the Frémont house. In 1974 it was moved to the museum grounds from its original location about seven blocks east of the museum. The Bashford house contains artifacts and furnishings from the period 1877–1912. It also is home to the museum's gift shop, which has a wide selection of books on the Old West, particularly Arizona. Old-style toys, bonnets, and bookmarks; video and audio tapes; and other items are also stocked.

The museum's main exhibit hall for artifacts and relics is in the Sharlot Hall building. Inside the log building, built in 1934 in the same style as the governor's mansion, are exhibits covering the area from prehistoric times to statehood. Soldiers, pioneers, Indians, miners, the territorial years, the early days of statehood, and more are covered. The main hall includes artifacts from the region from 1864 to 1920.

Other buildings built on or brought to the museum grounds and open for display are the schoolhouse, a replica of the town's first public school; Fort Misery, the only building at the museum that comes from the same era as the governor's mansion, and in which the first session of the supreme court was held; and the ranch house, built by Hall in the 1930s. Visitors can also view a blacksmith's shop; a gazebo; the Porter locomotive, vintage 1875, a train used on a mining railroad spur near the town of Congress; and a working iron-turbine windmill.

A monument on the grounds covers the remains of Pauline Weaver, a mountain man who is considered the first person to live in what is now Prescott.

The museum center, the only modern building at the site, houses an impressive research library and archives, conservation laboratory, offices, storage areas for artifacts, and working space for museum personnel. One area houses

(Continued on page 10)

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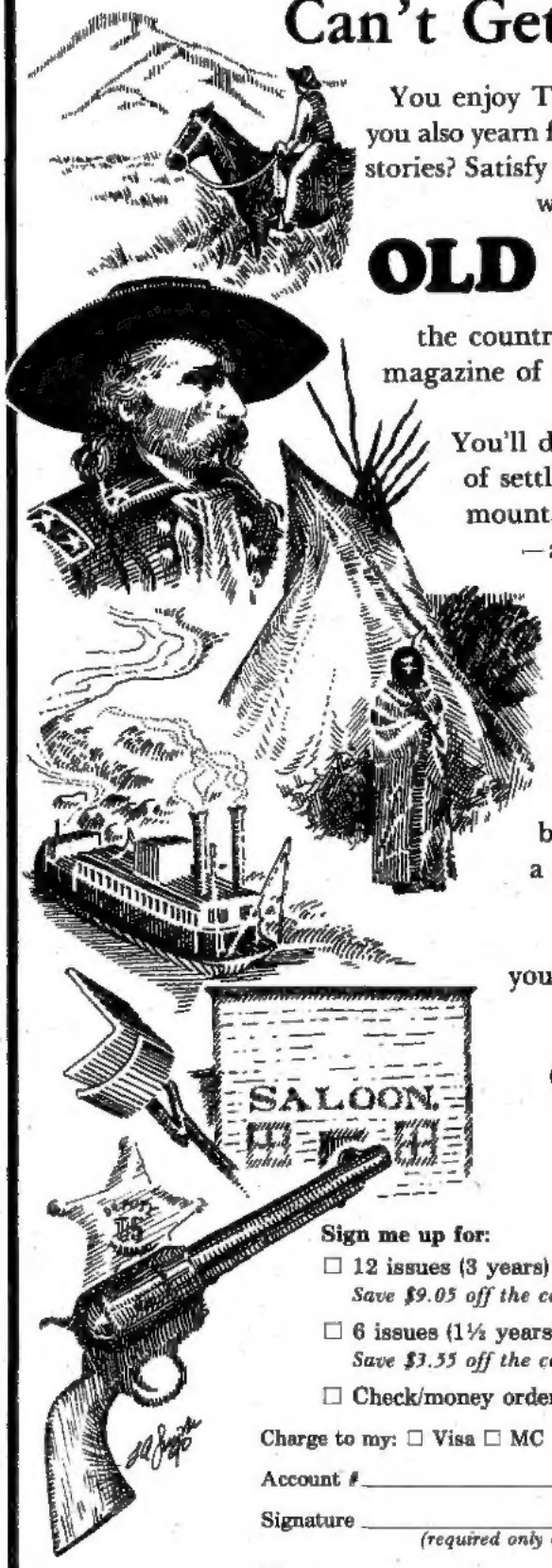

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(Continued from page 9)

changing exhibits. The sculpture of Solon H. Borglum (brother of Mount Rushmore sculptor Gutzon Borglum) is on display.

The museum's grassy grounds are dotted with all types of vegetation. Many of the plants were brought by the pioneers, and many are labeled. Just outside the governor's mansion, near the Sharlot Hall Building are the pioneer herb garden and the memorial rose garden.

Each spring the museum presents a folk arts fair featuring costumed demonstrators showing off pioneer skills. Fall brings a festival of traditional folk music, in which old-time instruments are used.

The Sharlot Hall Museum is on West Gurley Street, two blocks west of the county courthouse on the plaza. It is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. from April 1 to October 31; 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. November 1 through March 31; and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Sundays all year. The library and archives are open Tuesday through Friday during regular museum hours. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated.

Art Exhibits Focus on Native Americans

Landmark art works by and about Native Americans highlight the spring and summer exhibitions at the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indian and Western Art in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Twentieth-century Native American artists are the subject of "Woodlands: Contemporary Art of the Anishinabe," April 12 through June 24. Begun in the 1940s, the Woodlands School founded by Norval Morriseau has fostered traditional Native American art forms. This exhibition organized by the Thunder Bay Gallery of Ontario, Canada, draws upon works produced at the school. The forty works in the show include serigraphs, oils, acrylics, etchings, drawings, and watercolors, all centered on origin myths from a variety of North American tribes.

Early white artists' depictions of Native Americans are featured in "Early Illustrators of Western Indian Life: Karl Bodmer and His Contemporaries," April 20 through June 17. Drawn from the collections of the Indiana Historical Society and organized by the staff of the Eiteljorg Museum, this exhibition features some of the earliest printed images of North American Indians.

Karl Bodmer, along with George Catlin and Alfred Jacob Miller, was among the first artists to travel into the interior of the American wilderness to depict Native American life and culture. His journey up the Missouri River in 1833 resulted in a portfolio of prints first published in the 1840s that remains one of the best visual histories of the early western frontier. The Indiana Historical Society's full portfolio of Bodmer prints is in pristine condition, but has rarely been exhibited.

In addition to Bodmer, the exhibition will feature the work of James Otto Lewis and selections from the McKenney and Hall History of the North American Indian Tribes, and other early accounts of Indian life.

Besides those important historical exhibits, the work of new artists will be displayed in "The Eiteljorg Invitational: New Art From the West," July 13 through September 2. Each summer the Eiteljorg Museum will focus on those emerging artists who are continuing a long tradition in American art of focusing on the beauty, grandeur, and mythic stature of the West. The exhibition will contain a variety of techniques and approaches, from traditional and representational scenes of contemporary and historic western life to more modernistic interpretations. All of the artists will have at least one thing in common: each has been inspired by the West. All items in the exhibition will be for sale, and proceeds will benefit the museum's acquisitions fund.

For more information write the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indian and Western Art, 500 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204 or telephone (317) 636-WEST. Hours are 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and noon to 5:00 p.m. Sundays. The museum is closed Mondays, except during June, July, and August, as well as on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Western Roundup is a report on places to go and things to see associated with the history of the Old West. Submissions are welcome. Information on scheduled events should be submitted at least four months prior to the event. Items on historic places are also welcome. Send information including photos to: Western Roundup, Western Publications, P.O. Box 2107, Stillwater, OK 74076.

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Man Without a Past

By CHUCK PARSONS

"An oral tradition among the elders of my Scots-Irish Thompson family holds that Ben Thompson—gunfighter, soldier of fortune, and lawman—was a blood relative. Could you please provide more information about Ben Thompson, his parents, and his ancestry?" That request comes from Gregory Thompson, 931 N. Church Street, Jacksonville, Illinois 62650.

The extent of my genealogical information on Thompson is that he was born in the district of Knottingley, County of York, England, on November 2, 1843. His parents were William and Mary Ann Baker Thompson. The father was listed only as a "mariner," which could mean anything from a navy man to a fisherman. Ben's younger brother, William, was born August 28, 1845, also at Knottingley. He frequently got into more serious trouble than Ben did, but then turned to Ben to resolve it.

Mississippi River Gang

A question about early outlawry comes from Mrs. Robert Forsyth Little IV, 11423 Sagewhite Drive, Houston, Texas 77809. "Would you or your avid readers know anything about the John A. Murrel gang? They may have originated in Kentucky and were in Louisiana in the early 1830s. Sampson Mack Tennell of Lexington, Kentucky, shot and killed one of this gang for stealing his horses."

John A. Murrell (1804–48?) was notorious in the 1830s for his supposed plan to create a lower Mississippi River Valley gang of white outlaws and black slaves. His mother taught him how to steal, and his early crimes included riot, gambling, and horse stealing. He received a sentence of one year in prison for stealing a horse in 1826.

Murrell next became the leader of an interstate criminal organization. One of the gang's main operations included kidnapping free Negroes and slaves and then selling them to slave owners. In 1834 a Jackson, Tennessee, court convicted Murrell of Negro stealing, and he spent ten years in prison.

Murrell was released from prison in 1844 and died of tuberculosis several years later in Pikesville, Tennessee. Many of his contemporaries feared he was leading a slave rebellion, but historians now generally agree that the revolt existed more in the minds of the slave owners than in reality.

Doc Middleton

"I would appreciate any information concerning Doc Middleton—his father's name, where he came from, and what became of him." That request comes from William Hilbert Middleton, Route 4, Box 156, Rayville, Louisiana 71269.

"Middleton" was born February 9, 1851, in Bastrop, Texas, to Nancy Cherry, father unknown. On July 5, 1852, she married J.B. Riley and the child was given the name James M. Riley. In his mid-teens he experienced trouble with the law, as he was suspected of stealing a horse. Between that first brush with the law in 1865 and July 1875 he married, had one child, and killed at least one man. On July 22, 1875, he entered Huntsville prison as inmate #4643. He escaped, was recaptured, and escaped again on April 1, 1876.

He then assumed the alias of David C. "Doc" Middleton. Thereafter his main theater of operations was Nebraska. Even there he was continually in trouble with the law. He survived one assassination attempt, engaged in numerous horse stealing forays, took time to marry a third wife, and served time in Nebraska's prisons. For a while he was respectable enough to be appointed a deputy sheriff and to

Author's Collection

Austin City officials in 1881. Standing, left to right: J.W. Howard, treasurer; C.D. Johns, attorney; Ben Thompson, city marshal; E.B. Connell, city clerk; seated, left to right: Fred A. Sterzing, city assessor; Mayor L.M. Crooker; and Dr. R.H.L. Bibb, physician.

perform with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.

Perhaps Middleton's greatest moment of fame came when he rode in the much publicized horse race from Chadron, Nebraska, to the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. The "finish line" was to be Buffalo Bill's tent.

In the next decade Middleton wandered and operated saloons. In Douglas, Wyoming, he was arrested and jailed for violating the local option law. Due to the conditions of the jail, Middleton contacted erysipelas, which was complicated by pneumonia. He died on December 27, 1913, and was buried in an unmarked grave.

Hold-Up King

Bill Miner was an old-time outlaw whose career spanned many decades. John S. Prather, 8515 Dixie Highway, Birch Run, Mississippi 48415, writes, "I have read different books about Bill Miner, and there seems to be a disagreement concerning his origins. Would you please check your sources and set the record straight?"

Ezra Allen "Bill" Miner was born in Vevery Township, Onondaga, Ingham County, Michigan, on December 27, 1846. He was the son of Joseph and Harriet Miner.

Legendary as the "Grey Fox" during his lifetime, today Miner is of interest primarily because he survived from the early horseback days of outlawry well into the twentieth century. He was among the very first and the very last of the "Hold-up Kings." His first known criminal act was horse stealing in California in June 1863, his last the robbery of a Southern Express train on February 18, 1911, at White Sulpher, Georgia—half a century later!

After that last robbery he escaped twice from Georgia's prison system. He died on a prison farm September 2, 1913.

If you have a question, send it to Chuck Parsons, Western Publications, P.O. Box 2107, Stillwater, OK 74076. Please keep questions brief. Sign your full name and address, including zip code. Names and addresses will be published if question is used. Space limitations may not permit us to use all questions.

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Grandmother's Land
Sitting Bull in Canada
Part I: Arrival of the Warrior

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Sitting Bull at the height of his power.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first of a four-part series on the Sioux Indians' years in Canada following the defeat of Gen. George Armstrong Custer's Seventh Cavalry at the Little Bighorn in 1876.

By BRUCE WISHART

On June 9, 1875, near the bubbling headwaters of Battle Creek, on the floor of a wide valley in the Cypress Hills, a party of North West Mounted Policemen and Métis teamsters struggled with spruce and pine logs cut from the surrounding hillsides. Good progress had been made in the two days since their arrival; already they could see where a twelve-foot-high stockade would enclose some two hundred by three hundred feet of level ground. Tents were pitched where neatly whitewashed buildings soon would stand.

The men of B Troop, now understrength at about thirty men, had already been a year on the Canadian prairies. They had exiled the American whiskey trade and dealt firsthand with the mighty Blackfoot and other Indians of the plains. Already they were veterans. The new post that they were building would help to extend their influence.

Suddenly a large band of mounted Indians appeared. The builders paused in their work, tentatively eyeing nearby firearms.

A halfblood traveling with the Indians came forward and explained that they were Sioux who had just been driven over the international boundary by a troop of U.S. Cavalry. The newcomers seemed friendly. Then they noticed two police constables wearing parts of U.S. uniforms bought to replace worn-out issue clothing.

Instantly alarmed and suspicious, the Sioux pushed toward an officer who worked at a small table beneath a flut-

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A group of Sioux Indians at Turtle Mountain in the early 1870s

tering Union Jack. Superintendent James Morrow Walsh was a thirty-three-year-old, married career officer from Eastern Canada. He told them who and what the Mounted Police were.

The Sioux accused him of lying, saying that the members of the construction crew were Americans in disguise. They threatened to wipe out the camp.

In their year on the prairies the Mounted Police had learned how to bluff. Walsh replied brashly, "Should you attempt to do so you will lose many of your own, and very soon there will be more redcoats here than there are buffalo. None of you will be left alive."

The two sides were faced off, seemingly on the verge of combat. This time, it seemed, the bluff would not succeed. But just then a large party of Crees appeared from the east. Faced by their traditional enemies as well as the police, the Sioux fled.

So went the first meeting between Superintendent James Morrow Walsh and the Sioux Indians.

There are few Sioux in Canada today. In eight reserves scattered across Manitoba and Saskatchewan are the descendants of the Santees, Yanktonais, and Tetons who sought refuge on British soil in the 1860s and 1870s. These tribes of Dakotas traditionally included a large portion of what later became Canadian territory in their hunting and raiding area. They had, in fact, been loyal to the British in wars against the Americans, but they were concentrated on American land at the time of the treaty signings.

After the Minnesota Uprising of 1862, however, the Sioux quickly recalled their British ties. In the spring of 1863, Little Crow, Shakopee, and Medicine Bottle led their bands into Manitoba. Presenting themselves at Fort Garry, they insisted the Sioux were British, not American, Indians. A half-century before, they had found themselves under American dominion, but they did not recognize the geographic boundaries. The refugees displayed medals of George III and claimed they had been told that if they did not wish to live under the Americans they need only move north. Also, having once captured an American cannon and presented it to the British, they had been told that whenever they needed assistance, they need only ask. Now, here they were—moved north and needing help.

The British—in this case representatives of the Hudson's Bay Company—were unreceptive. Other than periodically issuing enough rations to stave off starvation, they offered the Sioux no more than refugee status. Even that was of questionable value and small reassurance. Little Crow was gunned down as he picked raspberries near Hutchinson during a brief return to Minnesota in the summer of 1863. Shakopee and Medicine Bottle were actually seized from their British retreat. Drugged and kidnapped from Fort Garry in December 1863, they were hauled to Fort Snelling, where they were later hanged.

Those who remained in Canada settled along the Assiniboine River under White Cap and Standing Buffalo. Though never given the full benefits of a Canadian treaty, the Sioux were given two small reserves in 1873. One additional band of some 160 lodges under White Eagle lived on the Canadian plains, running the buffalo and keeping to themselves. One of their regular camps was at Wood Mountain in the Cypress Hills.

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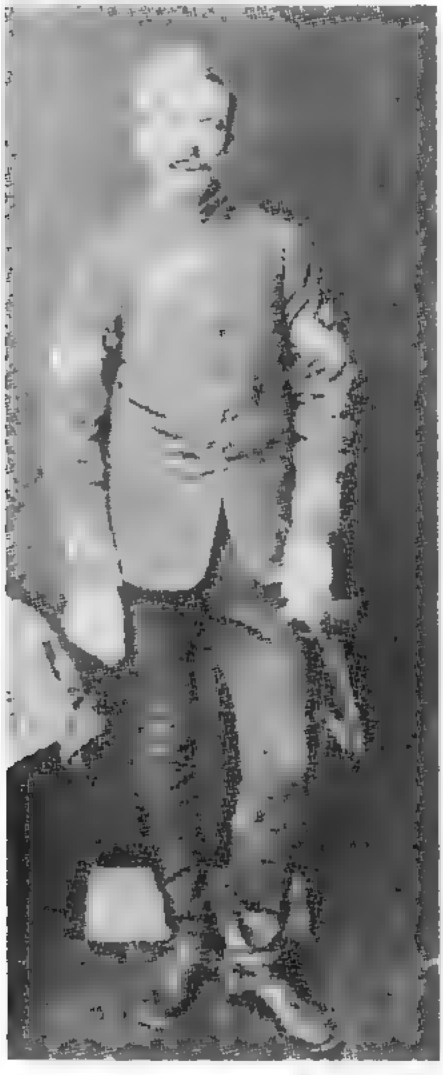
In the summer of 1874 a new element invaded the world of the Sioux. From Dufferin, on the Dakota-Manitoba border, a force of some 300 red-coated riders marched west to secure the Canadian frontier. The Sioux first contacted the column in August and from that point dogged its trail, maintaining contact. They were justifiably nervous. Accustomed to the blue-coated riders of the U.S. Cavalry, they were uncertain how to react toward the officers of the North West Mounted Police on their legendary "Great March West."

Commanding one troop of the police force was James Morrow Walsh, one of the force's first members. In 1873 he had recruited for the proposed Mounted Police, and that fall came west with the first contingent. During the winter he was the force's acting adjutant, riding master, and acting veterinary surgeon. In June 1874 he was promoted to inspector, and less than a year later, when he rode to the Cypress Hills to establish a post, he had become a superintendent.

Fort Walsh in the late 1870s. Mounted Policemen drill on the field guns bought in 1876



Glenbow Museum

The quintessential Mountie. Quartermaster Sergeant Sidney Stone displays the original NWMP uniform. Even before the creation of the force in the 1870s, the Indians associated the scarlet tunic with fair dealings.

It took Walsh a very short time to exercise control over the border country. From his base at Fort Walsh he established Kennedy's Crossing detachment on the Benton Trail, near the international boundary, and summer detachments under canvas at three different locations. By the following summer the Mounted Police were a visible deterrent to lawlessness in the Cypress Hills.

The summer of 1876 brought persistent rumors of the Sioux warfare south of the border. Anticipating trouble, the Mounted Police bought four seven-pounder guns and ammunition from the militia department in Winnipeg and transported them to Fort Walsh.

On May 26, 1876, Assistant Commissioner A.G. Irvine received word from Ottawa that American troops were likely to drive many hostile Indians from Dakota and Montana north to Canadian soil. In particular, the Sioux were expected to cross the line near Wood Mountain—"a most undesirable contingency." The force was ordered to carefully monitor the border, especially around Wood Mountain, and notify Ottawa by telegraph of the "slightest indication" of a Sioux influx. Inspector L.N.F. Crozier, stationed with Walsh, was detailed to keep a strict watch along the border.

The blow came on June 25, when the Sioux met the United States forces on the Little Bighorn. Although they were not completely unprepared, the news still took the Mounted Police somewhat by surprise. Walsh was on sick leave at Hot Springs, Arkansas, recovering from a bad attack of erysipelas, a painful skin infection that plagued his years on the plains. Ottawa contacted him immediately. As Walsh rushed back to the Cypress Hills, Crozier stepped up the police patrols along the border.

It was a tense moment. The police and the other Canadian authorities did not know how the Sioux would act if they sought refuge on Canadian soil. The 1862 refugees were peaceful, of course, but would a large force of Tetons, confident in victory, behave the same way? Of this the police were uncertain. Early in July the assistant commissioner led a party of some fifteen men from Fort Macleod to Fort Walsh to conduct a patrol of the Wood Mountain area.

MEANWHILE Crowfoot, head of the powerful Blackfoot Confederacy centered around Fort Macleod, received overtures from the Sioux south of the border to join in a war of extermination against the whites. At least in this the Mounted Police were safe, though they were not thoroughly convinced. The great, far-seeing statesman, Crowfoot, would have nothing to do with the Sioux proposal.

Walsh arrived back at the Cypress Hills in early August. His scouts ranged

Glenbow Museum

in anticipation of Sioux troubles.

the border country, reporting Indian movements. One Métis scout, Gabriel Solomon, gave a sworn statement that another scout had visited Sitting Bull's camp south of the line. "We can go nowhere without seeing the head of an American," the chief complained. "Our land is small; it is like an island. We have two ways to go—to the land of the Great Mother, or to the land of the Spaniards." Sitting Bull assured the scout that if the Sioux went to Grandmother's Land (a reference to Queen Victoria), they would keep the peace. Solomon also reported that a Sioux scout had been sent north to the Qu-Appelle area, but Solomon had turned him back in the fear that he had been sent north to gauge the country's defenses.

Reports came in, some clouded, some false. Word arrived that a Sioux camp already existed on Frenchman's Creek east of Fort Walsh, that the whiskey traders were among them, and that some Blood Indians had recently lost some horses to Sioux raiders. Sub-Inspector W.D. Antrobus set out to investigate. Although a Sioux camp had been briefly located near Wood Mountain, it had moved back across the border. The stories of horse stealing and whiskey trading proved groundless.

On September 25, Maj. Guido Ilges, of the Seventh U.S. Infantry at Benton, Montana, wrote to Walsh. He reported U.S. troop movements and suggested that Walsh should report anything he heard about the Sioux to Colonel Gibbon, then in the neighborhood of Fort Peck. Ilges predicted that Sitting Bull and a following of some 800 warriors would soon appear in the vicinity of Fort Walsh-Wood Mountain. Walsh relayed that information to the Canadian secretary of state, adding, with growing confidence, that the Sioux were "all tired of war" and that sixty men would be "quite sufficient" to man Fort Walsh.

That is not to say the Americans' fear of the Sioux had not affected the police. Hearing a rumor that Sitting Bull's band was massing some eighty miles southeast of Fort Walsh for an attack on Fort Peck and Fort Belknap, Walsh immediately dispatched a courier to each fort and another to Benton. The U.S. military acted on the information, and it earned Walsh public thanks in the Fort Benton *Record*.

In early October word came that a number of Sioux had assembled at Rocky Creek, a branch of Frenchman's Creek, some ninety miles south and east of the fort. Walsh led a small escort out to investigate, but it turned out that the band of about 1,000 was still south of the line. They were fully occupied in hunting buffalo, and Walsh could foresee no immediate trouble. He returned to his headquarters, detailing scouts to shadow the Sioux.

Finally, in November, came the positive information that the Sioux were moving north toward Wood Mountain in a camp consisting of fifty-seven lodges. Walsh sent Sub-Inspector Edmund Frechette and a small group of constables and scouts to visit the camp. They were delayed by extreme storms, however, and Walsh soon became uneasy about their long absence. On December 13, he led a party of twelve Mounted Police and three scouts for Wood Mountain. They soon met Frechette's party, who reported an additonal fifty-two lodges of Sioux, which brought the size of the camp to over one hundred lodges.

December 17, 1876, was a bitterly cold day. A thirty-five-year-old Quebecois trader named Jean-Louis Legaré, who had helped to found the Métis settlement at Wood Mountain, and his companions were gathered around the stove in Legaré's trading house. With the crunch of hooves on snow, the noses of several horses suddenly appeared outside his window. Legaré and his companions paid no attention to the twelve

Glenbow Museum

NWMP officers at Fort Walsh in 1879. Back row, left to right: Percy R. Neale; F.J. Dickens, son of the novelist; W.D. Antrobus; J.H. McIlree; E. Frechette; and Cecil Denny. Center: A.G. Irvine, assistant commissioner; James F. Macleod, commissioner; and Dr. John Kittson. Front, E.D. Clark.

National Archives of Canada/C 17030

James Morrow Walsh. Walsh was just thirty-six years old and already a plains veteran when the Sioux arrived in the Cypress Hills

Rumor had the feared Sitting Bull in all places at once. The chief was said to be heading for the boundary south of Wood Mountain at the head of a closely pursued following. A more specific report had Sitting Bull's camp moving up Rocky Creek. And the first Sioux camp was still growing.

mounted Indians who huddled in buffalo robes to fight the cold.

Half an hour later, one warrior slid from his horse and threw open the door. After a long pause, during which he ignored Legaré and the others, he sauntered in and seated himself on the floor. He slowly called in the others, one by one. Finally they all sat on the floor, and cold air flooded in from the open door.

For two hours no one spoke.

Suddenly the warriors leapt to their feet and vigorously shook hands with Legaré and the others, introducing themselves as Sioux. The leader's name was Little Knife. One of his companions, Crow, announced, "We left the American side because we could not sleep. We heard that the Big Woman was very good to her children and we came to sleep quietly."

This reconnaissance party begged for provisions, which they were given, and on the following day more Sioux arrived at Legaré's post. Apparently satisfied, the Dakotas invaded Canada in force. On December 19 Black Moon and a mixed following of Tetons camped beside White Eagle's refugees of 1862. To White Eagle's one hundred fifty lodges, Black Moon added a camp of some 500 men, 1,000 women, 1,400 children, 3,500 horses, and 30 army mules. Among the warriors of this formidable force were Little Knife, Spotted Eagle, and Long Dog.

Although he could do little but welcome them, White Eagle resented the newcomers. Fearing their effect upon his young warriors and upon his situation in Canada, White Eagle explained the laws of the Mounted Police and welcomed Walsh's arrival at Legaré's post on the twenty-first.

Following the already-established custom of the Mounted Police, Walsh met with the new Sioux refugees to explain the Canadian laws. The Indians were quick to relate their British ties, as their relatives had done thirteen years earlier. Accepting that at face value, Walsh emphatically ordered that they could not raid across the border if they wanted sanctuary in Canada. They swore not to do so.

The newcomers were desperate for ammunition to hunt with and begged Walsh to allow them some. Walsh announced that the Grandmother did not want anyone in her country to starve, and, provided none was sent over the line, Legaré would be authorized to dispense a small quantity of ammunition for hunting. The Sioux rejoiced, but Walsh was taking no enormous risk. The trader had only some 2,000 rounds of fixed ammunition, which averaged two and a half rounds per family in the Sioux camp.

THE SIOUX thrived that winter. They scattered into several smaller camps. There was adequate wood and water and plenty of buffalo. Perhaps most important of all, they were in complete safety from U.S. troops. They cleaned out Legaré's stock as they increased their wealth.

The greatest concern of the Mounted Police, however, was the whereabouts of Sitting Bull. The Sioux were reticent. His last recorded camp, it was learned, was on the Red Water.

Walsh rearranged his forces—about one hundred officers and men—to watch the Sioux and to deal with the threatened arrival of Sitting Bull. The superintendent established the East End detachment at the foot of the Cypress Hills, forty-five miles from Fort Walsh, and another at Wood Mountain, one hundred thirty miles farther east of East End and not far from Legaré's trading house.

Although the Mounted Police kept a close watch on the Sioux, they did not exercise any special caution. In his report to the commissioner on Decem-

ber 31, 1876, Walsh expressed his belief that the buffalo would keep the Sioux at Wood Mountain for the winter. There were reports that more Sioux were coming, but the superintendent had heard nothing definite. He was convinced that all would be positively influenced by White Eagle.

Of more concern to the police was the relationship between the incoming Sioux and the native Canadian Indians. Besides the anticipated friction between the Sioux and such hereditary enemies as the Crees, there were lingering fears of an anti-white confederacy (even though the police were aware that Crowfoot had vetoed Sitting Bull's proposals the previous summer). Perhaps the most pressing concern of all, however, was the added pressure that the Sioux would place on the wild game stocks.

Though buffalo were still plentiful in the Cypress Hills, their overall numbers obviously were diminishing. One of the first actions of the new territorial government, established in November, was an unenforceable prohibition on the shooting of buffalo during certain months. There was a growing resentment, particularly on the part of the Blackfoot, that the Sioux were quickening the demise of the buffalo.

There were other concerns as well. Civilization was coming to the Canadian West. The province of Manitoba was already six years old, and the telegraph was pushing slowly across the prairies. The following summer would bring the first locomotive to the West. The presence of hostile Indians could conceivably inhibit white settlement.

Complicating those concerns was an international entanglement; at the time Canada was not in charge of her own foreign affairs, so the presence of "American Indians" on Canadian soil created a diplomatic impasse for three governments. As the winter of 1876–77 passed, Canada approached the United States for an amicable settlement to the problem—but any settlement was useless without the cooperation of the Sioux, who were simply unwilling to return to the U.S.

Rumor had the feared Sitting Bull in all places at once. The chief was said to be heading for the boundary south of Wood Mountain at the head of a large and closely pursued following. A more specific report had Sitting Bull's camp moving up Rocky Creek. And the first Sioux camp was still growing, with more and more refugees flocking north all the time.

Walsh set out immediately with a strong escort, and quickly covered the hundred miles to Pinto Horse Buttes. When scouts sent out from the camp he had established near there failed to report any sign of the Sioux, Walsh headed for the boundary on March 3,

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Museum

NWMP horse camp at Grayburn Coulee, Cypress Hills, circa 1879. From central locations such as Fort Walsh, the Mounted Police used small outposts to control the vast areas under their care. Note the assorted clothing—only the corporal is in full uniform.

accompanied by just three of his most trusted scouts—Daniels, Morin, and the faithful Louis Léveillé. At the White Mud they split up, with Walsh and Morin scouting the west side and Daniels and Léveillé the east.

About seven miles along the river Walsh and Morin discovered a fresh trail, and they began to follow it south. Before long, Morin spotted an Indian on the skyline, then another and another. Soon they were surrounded by Indians, and a partially erected camp appeared on the opposite side of the stream.

There was panic in the Sioux camp, for they immediately assumed that the two white men were American soldiers. Horses were caught and mounted. Women and children scrambled for safety. A large party of warriors appeared before Walsh and Morin. Walsh tried to explain that they were not Americans, but the Indians did not believe him.

Just then Daniels and Léveillé, the latter convinced that Walsh was in danger, came charging over a hilltop behind the camp. Alarmed even more, some of the Indians scattered to form a defense. Walsh and Morin tried to cross the water, but were met by drawn guns. Thinking fast, Walsh withdrew, and Léveillé and Daniels crossed some distance away before joining them. Walsh called out that he would hold his ground until the Dakotas were convinced of their mistake.

Finally the police party was allowed to cross, and Walsh learned that this was not the camp of Sitting Bull after all, but rather that of Sitting Bull's famous uncle, Four Horns. After reassuring the Sioux and seeing them again at work erecting their fifty-seven lodges, Walsh told Four Horns that he should assemble his warriors to hear Canadian laws. The police party was offered the hospitality of one large lodge.

Then, to the absolute astonishment of the Sioux, Walsh entered the lodge, lay down, and promptly fell asleep. His scouts rested around him. The Sioux had no precedent for this type of behavior from a white soldier.

Before long Daniels awakened the superintendent. The warriors, in considerable agitation and suspense, had gathered before the lodge. Walsh explained the laws without delay, again stressing that there must be no raiding across the border.

National Archives of Canada/C 2488

NWMP scout and interpreter Louis Léveillé was particularly devoted to Walsh and was never entirely happy when separated from him.

Suddenly a warrior appeared before Walsh, aggressively announcing that he recognized the superintendent as an American soldier, disguised to deceive the Sioux. Walsh ignored him, but when the Indian persisted, Walsh railed at him and called him a traitor. Argument sprang up all around, but Four Horns quickly quelled it by proposing that the police party spend the night in the Sioux camp. Walsh replied that, if it would help quell their fears, he would certainly do so—on the condition that his accuser also be held. Four Horns agreed.

Walsh asked that a message be sent to a Yankton camp under Medicine Bear and Black Horn, telling the chiefs that Four Horns was holding Walsh prisoner. Four Horns protested that Walsh was not a prisoner. Walsh replied, "If I attempted to leave your camp your warriors would stop me."

His message sent, Walsh contentedly turned in for the night.

At dawn, 200 warriors under Medicine Bear and Black Horn charged into camp. Black Horn sprang to the ground before Walsh, embraced him, and demanded to be brought to the man who accused Walsh of being an imposter.

Four Horns was much embarrassed to learn that the accuser had slipped away during the night. But there were no further doubts about Walsh. Four Horns pledged that his following would obey Canadian laws. Satisfied, Walsh and his party left the camp that afternoon.

Walsh placed a tiny, temporary detachment on the southeast slope of the Cypress Hills, and retreated to Fort Walsh again to await the arrival of Sitting Bull.

Canadian authorities were still trying desperately to find a way to see the Sioux quickly returned to the United States; for, as Mounted Police commissioner J.F. Macleod commented, "In present demoralized condition they will be much easier dealt with than if they are allowed time to become rich and powerful." Commissioner Macleod joined Lt. Gov. David Laird in pressing for a decision from Ottawa that would allow specific, firm action regarding the Sioux. They wanted the refugees returned to the United States before their presence brought conflict to the Canadian plains.

In the Cypress Hills a scout carried word to Walsh that the Sioux were moving north along the White Mud toward Pinto Horse Buttes. Then came word that Sitting Bull was approaching the boundary with a large following. Walsh set out for the Buttes immediately, taking with him a sergeant, three constables, and two scouts—Louis Léveillé and Gabriel Solomon.

When they arrived, the Sioux camp was already in place. At last the man who tamed the Cypress Hills was about to meet the chief who had united the Sioux in their last, desperate gamble to save the Black Hills.

Next Month: "The Time of Power"

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Saga of Old Fort Nichols

By ANGIE IRONS

The summer of 1864 went down as one of the bloodiest in the history of the Santa Fe Trail. The Civil War was raging and Union military supply trains, as well as civilian caravans, snaked down the trail into New Mexico. They offered an irresistably bountiful booty, and bands of Kiowas, Comanches, and Cheyennes attacked the lumbering caravans with merciless fury. Brig. Gen. James H. Carleton, military commander of the Department of New Mexico, ordered more men along the trail, then gritted his teeth waiting for winter.

Winter usually brought a peace of sorts to the trail. Travel slackened and most of the Indians abandoned their raids in favor of a warm winter camp. But the winter of 1864–65 was to be different. On November 29, Col. John Chivington and his Third Colorado Cavalry swooped down upon Black Kettle's Cheyenne village in a surprise attack which turned into a massacre with many Cheyenne deaths.

The results were devastating. In retaliation against Chivington's Sand Creek Massacre, the Kiowa-Apaches, Arapahos, and Southern Cheyennes banded together. As the weather cleared they flooded the countryside, torturing, killing, pillaging, and raping. The fast approaching summer would bring a new bloodbath to the Santa Fe Trail, and General Carleton knew it. Quickly he began organizing a new defense for the trail.

More fortification was needed along the trail. To protect the main trail, Fort Dodge rose on the Kansas prairie; on the Mountain, or Upper Route, of the Trail, Fort Aubrey rose. To fortify the Lower Route, or Cimarron Cutoff, of the trail, Carleton turned to Col. Kit Carson and his First New Mexico Cavalry Volunteers.

The Cimarron Cutoff was perhaps the most dangerous of all the trail's branches. It parted from the Main and Mountain routes at a point on the Cimarron River in Kansas called the Cimarron Crossing. From there it angled through Kansas, across what is

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Looking north through the gate in Fort Nichols' south wall. The landscape has changed very little since the fort's heyday.

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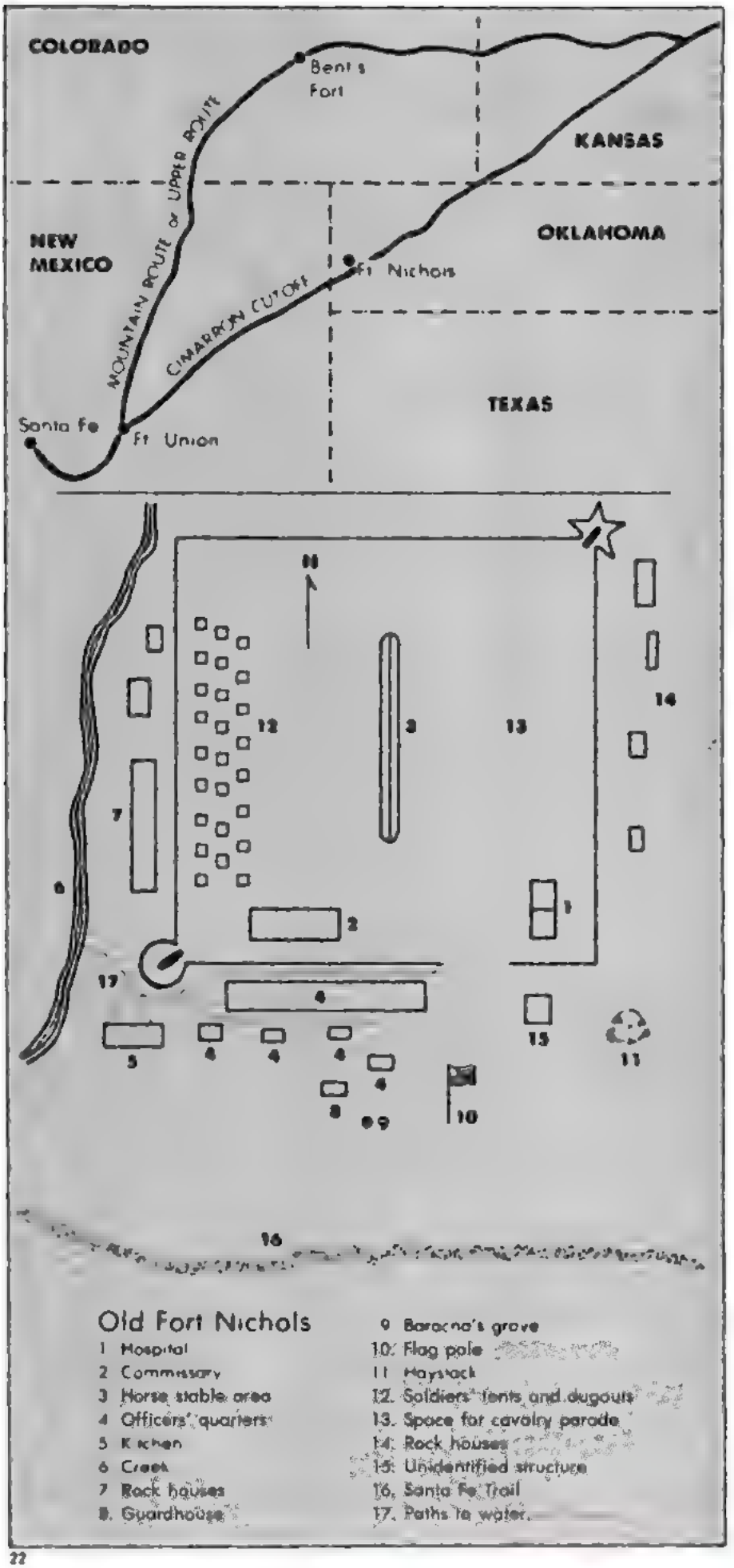


today's Oklahoma panhandle, where it entered New Mexico and continued on to Fort Union. A short distance south of Fort Union, the cutoff joined the Mountain Route, and the two trails continued as one into Santa Fe.

While the Mountain Route was afforded some protection by Fort Lyon, the Cimarron Cutoff—some three hundred Indian-infested miles—was unprotected by any fortification. On May 20, 1865, a little more than a month after the end of the Civil War, Colonel Carson's First New Mexico Cavalry Volunteers, accompanied by a company of the First Colorado Cavalry and several detachments of First New Mexico Infantry Volunteers, marched out of Fort Union. Their orders were to locate a suitable fort site along the Cimarron Cutoff and to erect a post there.

Carson's little army numbered about three hundred. Most of the infantry was made up of Mexicans, loyal volunteers to the Union. There was a double handful of Indian scouts and a small herd of beeves. Several wagons carrying supplies and two shiny mountain howitzers rounded out the outfit.

THEY WERE no mere wandering band, searching along the Cimarron Cutoff for a fort site—they knew where they were going. Cold Springs, sometimes called Cedar Bluff, marked the halfway point on the Cimarron Cutoff. They headed for it, hoping that it would provide a defendable site. A short distance from Cold Springs they left the trail and followed a little prong of Carrizo Creek to a high knoll.

Rising above the prairie, the knoll was readily defensible; water was close at hand; and just a few miles away a timbered canyon offered an easy source of wood. The only threat to the site was a high ridge about three quarters of a mile to the northeast, and the mountain howitzers could easily defend against that. "This is the place!" Carson barked. Then men slipped from their tired mounts, and work on the post that was to become Fort Nichols began.

The exact date when Carson arrived at the Fort Nichols site has been lost to history. Most historians, however, seem to believe that he arrived on June 1, 1865. Carson thought he was still in New Mexico, and all his dispatches from the new post to the War Department bear the dateline, "Fort Nichols, New Mexico." In actuality, Carson had overshot the New Mexican border by four miles and had built Fort Nichols in what was to later become the Oklahoma panhandle.

The fort, named for Capt. Charles P. Nichols of the First California Cavalry, was never intended to be a permanent post. From the very beginning General Carleton had planned to abandon it around November 1, when the peak travel season on the trail would be over.

Kit Carson was known for being easy-going with his men and his encampments. Fearful of that reputation and the imminent possibility of Indian attack, General Carleton ordered Carson "to have an adequate defense thrown up against sudden attack." Given that order and the availability of building materials, Colonel Carson built Fort Nichols far beyond the requirements of a temporary fort.

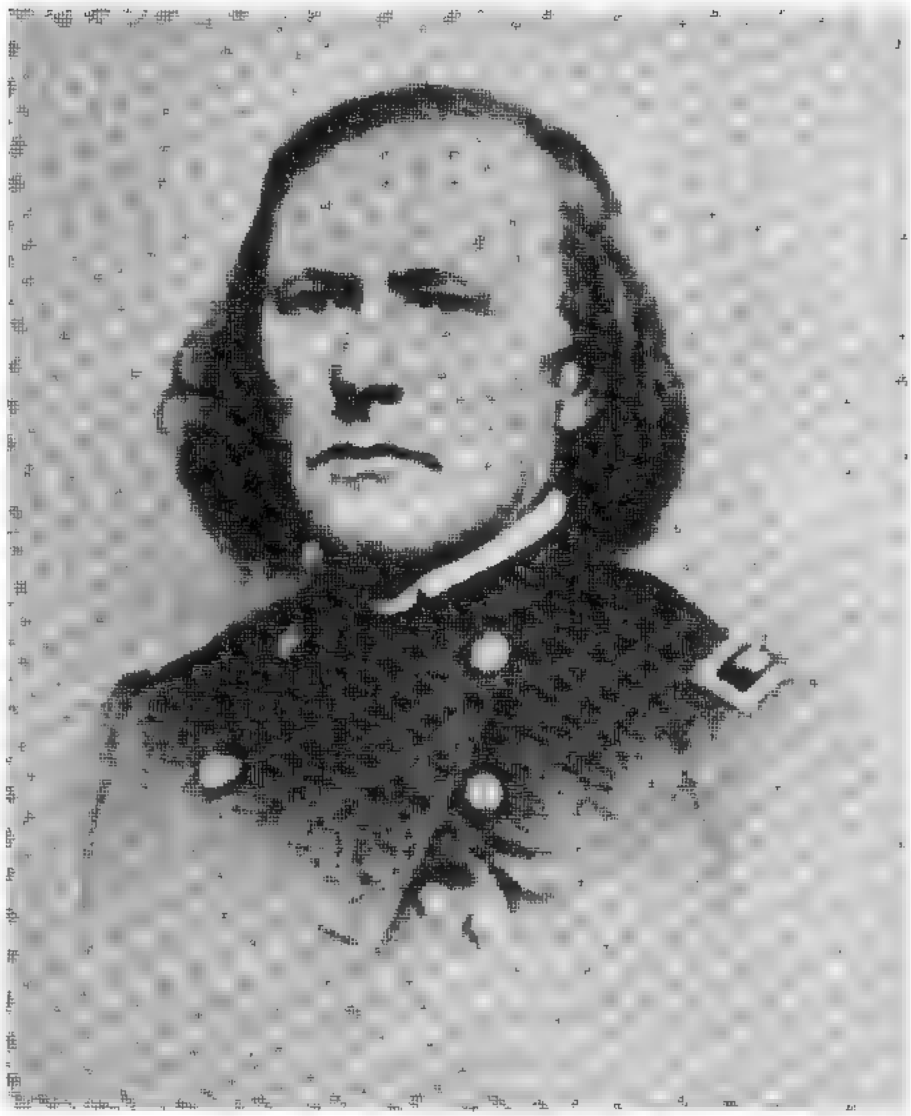
An abundance of large stones lay scattered, half-hidden in the grass on the prairie and in nearby canyons. Carson ordered them gathered, and the garrison, using drags, wagons, and hand-hewn slips, hauled the stones to the fort site.

They erected a high wall of stone and earth enclosing a 200-foot square and then promptly moved their tents and horses inside. Outside, on three sides of the enclosure they dug a deep ditch twelve feet wide. Dirt from the ditch was thrown up and packed against the wall for reinforcement. The only opening, a gate, hugged the east corner of the south wall. Colonel Carson and his garrison called the enclosure a fort, but army correspondence surprisingly refers to it as the "corral."

Embrasures to hold the mountain howitzers were built on the southwest and northeast corners of the wall. Later, army officials sent to investigate the fort long after its abandonment described one of the embrasures: "...at the northeast corner is a star-shaped wall filled on the inside with earth sloping from the top of the wall to the floor of the corral. Evidently it was placed here to hold a cannon, as it faces a rocky ridge some three-quarters of a mile away."

The enclosure was more than a corral. Inside, close to the east wall, the men constructed a stone hospital. Its eighteen-by-thirty-six-foot area was divided into two rooms. One was for the patients; the other served as the patients' mess room, the surgery room, and the abode of the hospital orderly.

A fourteen-by-seventy-foot stone commissary was built inside the enclosure close to the south wall. That narrow building ran along the wall and provided a safe storage place for the fort's supplies. It also offered a cool, damp refuge from the burning sun, and many an off-duty soldier lolled just inside its doorway.



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Col. Kit Carson located the site for Fort Nichols. He began construction of the fort but within three weeks was recalled to Fort Union.

Kit Carson was known for being easy-going with his men and his encampments. Fearful of that reputation and the imminent possibility of Indian attack, General Carleton ordered Carson "to have an adequate defense thrown up against sudden attack." Thus Carson built far beyond the requirements of a temporary fort.

Tents for the enlisted men, both cavalry and infantry, were set up inside the post in a series of neat, long rows in front of the west wall. In the center of the fort, stretching north and south, they built an eighteen-by-thirty-foot rock way, or walk, of flat stones laid at ground level. Along it ran a long rope to which the cavalry tethered their horses every night. The walkway prevented animal waste from soaking into the ground, and thus kept the ground beneath the horses' hooves from turning into a quagmire of urine induced mud. Undoubtedly the walkway was cleaned on a daily basis, thereby improving the sanitation as well as the odor of the fort. A high flag pole, brandishing its proud colors, was placed about a hundred feet south outside of the gate.

Within days, six women had arrived at the fort. Two of them were officers' wives, two were wives of Mexican soldiers, and two were wives of the Indian scouts. The Mexican women did

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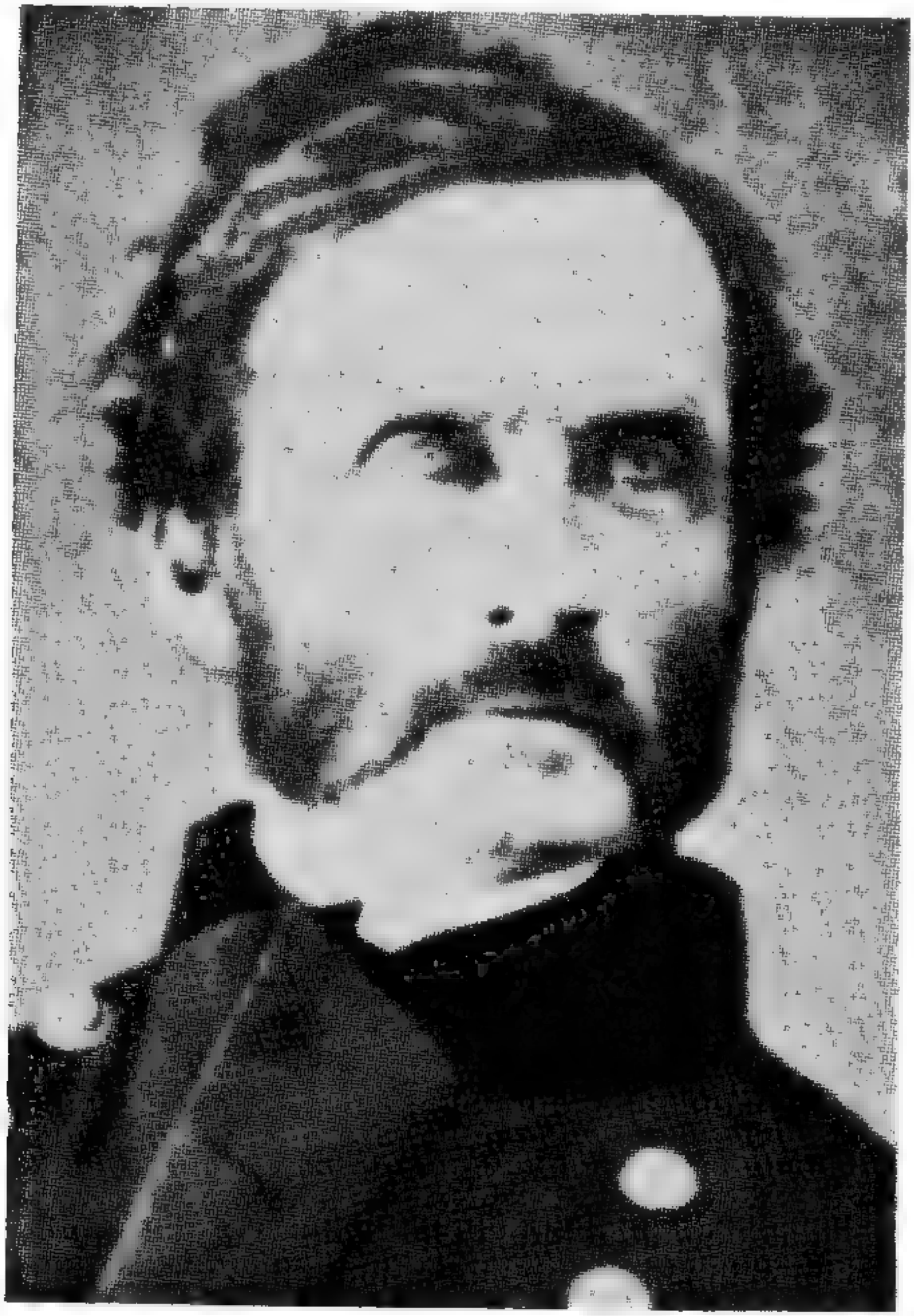

Library of Congress

Brig. Gen. James H. Carleton was the military commander of the Department of New Mexico when he ordered Kit Carson to build Fort Nichols.

the soldiers' washing for the fee of one dollar a month. At first everyone lived in tents. Then a few dugouts began appearing in the enlisted men's tent area. Soon a series of stone rooms were built just outside the south wall as officers' quarters. A short time later a few more rock houses were erected paralleling the east and west walls. The rock houses were dug half underground, with four-foot-high rock walls above ground. For a roof, long poles cut from a nearby timbered canyon were laid crosswise over the rock walls and plastered with layers of mud and straw.

Colonel Carson had intended to remain at Fort Nichols until its abandonment, but in mid-July he was recalled to Fort Union to testify before a government committee investigating Indian affairs. Command of Fort Nichols fell to Maj. Albert H. Pfeiffer.

Major Pfeiffer was a good friend of Kit Carson and an old hand at Indian fighting. He had recently lost his wife, and the dramatic story of her death and his bravery was on the tongues of everyone at the post. In whispered voices and hushed tones they spoke of it, telling and retelling the tale—but never in front of the major, for no one wanted to add to his sorrow.

Pfeiffer's wife had been a woman of rare beauty, and he had taken her with him when he drew duty at Fort McRae, New Mexico. While there, Pfeiffer and his wife, under an escort of a dozen troopers, rode to a mineral springs about ten miles from the fort to bathe.

Once they reached the springs, the escort moved off a short distance to allow Pfeiffer and his wife to bathe in private. Suddenly a horde of shrieking Indians rode down upon them. The attacking band split, a portion of the warriors heading for the escort patrol a few thousand yards from the springs. They hit them hard, pinning them down, while the remaining Indians continued on to the springs. Pfeiffer sprang naked from the springs. He grabbed his rifle and an ammo belt and bolted away. Help from the fort was their only chance, and he sped out onto the desert sands with his wife's screams echoing behind him. He knew they would not kill her. . . at least not right away.

For a moment his escape went unnoticed; then suddenly several Indians cut from the band in hot pursuit. As they drew close one of them loosed an arrow. It thudded into Pfeiffer's hip but he kept going. He reached a small enclosure of rocks and slipped behind them, his rifle barking death at the approaching braves. They stopped short, scattering for cover.

The sun burned brightly overhead, searing Pfeiffer's body as he defended his position. Several times he tried to withdraw the arrow from his hip, but without success. The next several hours passed with only sporadic fire from either side. The sun grew higher and hotter, and the Indians, discouraged by Pfeiffer's deadly marksmanship, slipped away to rejoin their comrades.

After a short wait to make sure the Indians had gone, Pfeiffer hobbled nine miles to the fort, where he blurted his story and fell into a dead faint. Soldiers were dispatched, but it was too late for Pfeiffer's wife. She had been carried off by the Indians. The rescue patrol gave chase and when the Indians realized that the woman was becoming an encumbrance to them, they killed her.

When the post surgeon removed the arrow from Pfeiffer's hip, his sun-toasted skin began peeling off. Within two days all the skin had peeled away from his body, and for two months he lingered near death. He awoke to hear the sad news of his wife's death. Two more months of convalescence followed before Pfeiffer was able to return to his full duties. The experience left him with loneliness and a limp that would remain with him for life. All who heard the story admired his courage, and the little gar-

rison at Fort Nichols was proud to have him as their commander.

Pfeiffer's manpower was limited, but he tried to maintain a fifty-man escort for each wagon train. The first escort left Fort Nichols on June 19, guarding a seventy-wagon caravan. For each caravan escort the orders were the same: if attacked stay with the caravan, corral the wagons, and fight back. Usually Pfeiffer had four escort teams away from the post: one each coming and going from Fort Union, New Mexico, to Fort Nichols. That left a compliment of about a hundred men to guard the fort itself.

Sometimes the escorts coming from one direction were late, and wagon trains backed up at Fort Nichols to wait for them. Sometimes they had to wait ten or fifteen days and as many as five or six wagon trains would be camped around the little post. Many of the wagons needed repairs, and a blacksmith shop was built near the post to facilitate them. A bed of surface coal lay on the prairie less than two miles away. It was gathered and used to fire the blacksmith's big furnace.

Fort Nichols did not sit directly on the Santa Fe Trail. A wide wagon road broke away from the Santa Fe Trail about five miles north of the fort. Its ruts led to a wagon campsite close to Fort Nichols, then left the campsite and rejoined the main trail about a mile south of the fort.

Mail and stagecoaches had to abide by the same rules as the caravans. Military orders forbade them to leave without an escort. Civilian wagon trains could continue without escort, but only if 100 able-bodied, armed men were present. Few caravans were willing to go on without an army escort, and they willingly waited at Fort Nichols for extra protection. Military and government caravans were required to wait for an escort.

As activities at the fort began to fall into a regular routine, a stone and dugout kitchen was built near the southwest corner of the post. To fill the men's need for bread, an adobe bakery, boasting an ornate archway, was added to the kitchen. A little-used guard tent, reinforced with poles, was erected about fifty feet west of the flag pole. Its prisoners were seldom guilty of anything more serious than a fistfight or an overnight drunk.

Armed pickets constantly roamed between the fort and the horizon in search of Indians. At night sentinels were posted near the wagon camp and fort. Since the ridge to the northeast presented a possible threat, the mountain howitzer that guarded it was kept loaded with grapeshot. Neither of the howitzers were fired in battle, but on July 4, Major Pfeiffer ordered them fired in honor of the day.

Hunting along the breaks north of the fort was good, and venison often graced the mess tables. Hardtack, bacon, flour, beef, sugar, and coffee made up the rest of the fare. It seemed to be a healthy post, reporting only one death during its existence. With no previous need for a cemetery, the lone body was buried a few yards southwest of the flag pole. A two-foot pile of stones was placed over the grave and a four-foot cross made out of a solid piece of sandstone was placed at its head. Its inscription read, "A. Baracna—Private, First New Mexico Cavalry Volunteers Died 1865." Some reports give the man's name as Barada or Baranaca.

For a moment Pfeiffer's escape went unnoticed; then several Indians cut from the band in hot pursuit. As they drew close one of them loosed an arrow. It struck Pfeiffer's hip but he kept going. He reached a small enclosure of rocks and slipped behind them, his rifle barking death at the approaching braves.

The dull routine of the post was broken by walks, short escorted rides, well-guarded picnics, and visits with the travelers on the wagon caravans. On the whole, there was little fighting, drinking, or gambling. It was a busy post, with very little time left for vices.

As the summer progressed, the Indian raids slowed and it became apparent that the additional forts and escorts ordered by General Carleton were working. The army's quartermaster inspector saw Fort Nichols as a boon and suggested in his report for 1865 that "a permanent camp or post should be established on this route at or near the present one of Colonel Carson's where fuel and water can be procured."

The report was ignored, and as fall arrived Pfeiffer received orders to abandon Fort Nichols. Even though he knew the fort had been intended only as temporary, he had felt the army would recognize the good it was doing and decide not to abandon it. That the orders were unexpected is apparent, for several buildings were abandoned in mid-construction. The men had been put to work haying and had built up two large hay stacks in anticipation of the need for winter feeds. One of the stacks rose on the nearby prairie. The other had been hauled by wagon and unloaded near the fort, its huge mound rising just several dozen yards from the gate.

The orders to abandon the fort had come in mid-September, earlier than anyone could have expected. Now that the Civil War was over, the army's budget had been cut and Fort Nichols had fallen prey to a shortage of funds. Pfeiffer shook his head in disbelief and began packing. Late travelers on the trail stared in shock when they heard the news, and stage drivers murmured nervously about the possibility of having to drive over the trail unprotected. But the orders were carried out.

On September 22, a note declaring that the fort was the property of the U.S. Army and should not be molested was nailed to the flag post. In neat formation, the wagons, remaining beeves, cavalry, Indian scouts, and infantry marched out onto the wagon road. In a few days, they reached the safety of Fort Union.

The next summer a shocked army patrol stumbled over the remains of Fort Nichols. Her walls had been caved in, her stones scattered, her roof poles broken and many of them burned. The hay stack had disappeared; only the cross of Baracna's grave remained unmolested. It was assumed the destruction was the handiwork of angry and frustrated Indians.

Danger on the Santa Fe Trail, especially on the Cimarron Cutoff did not end with the abandonment of Fort Nichols. Killing and pillaging continued for nearly a decade until the railroads finally spelled death for the Cimarron Cutoff.

In 1963, Fort Nichols was designated a registered national historic landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior Historic Park Service. A marker erected near Fort Nichols reads in part, "This site possesses exceptional value in commemorating and illustrating the history of the United States." Today, traces of the Santa Fe Trail can still be seen just south of the ruins of the little fort that had once so admirably protected it.

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Crazy Ben Dollivar's Secret Gold Cache

By W.T. BLOCK
Illustrated by BUD McCAULLEY

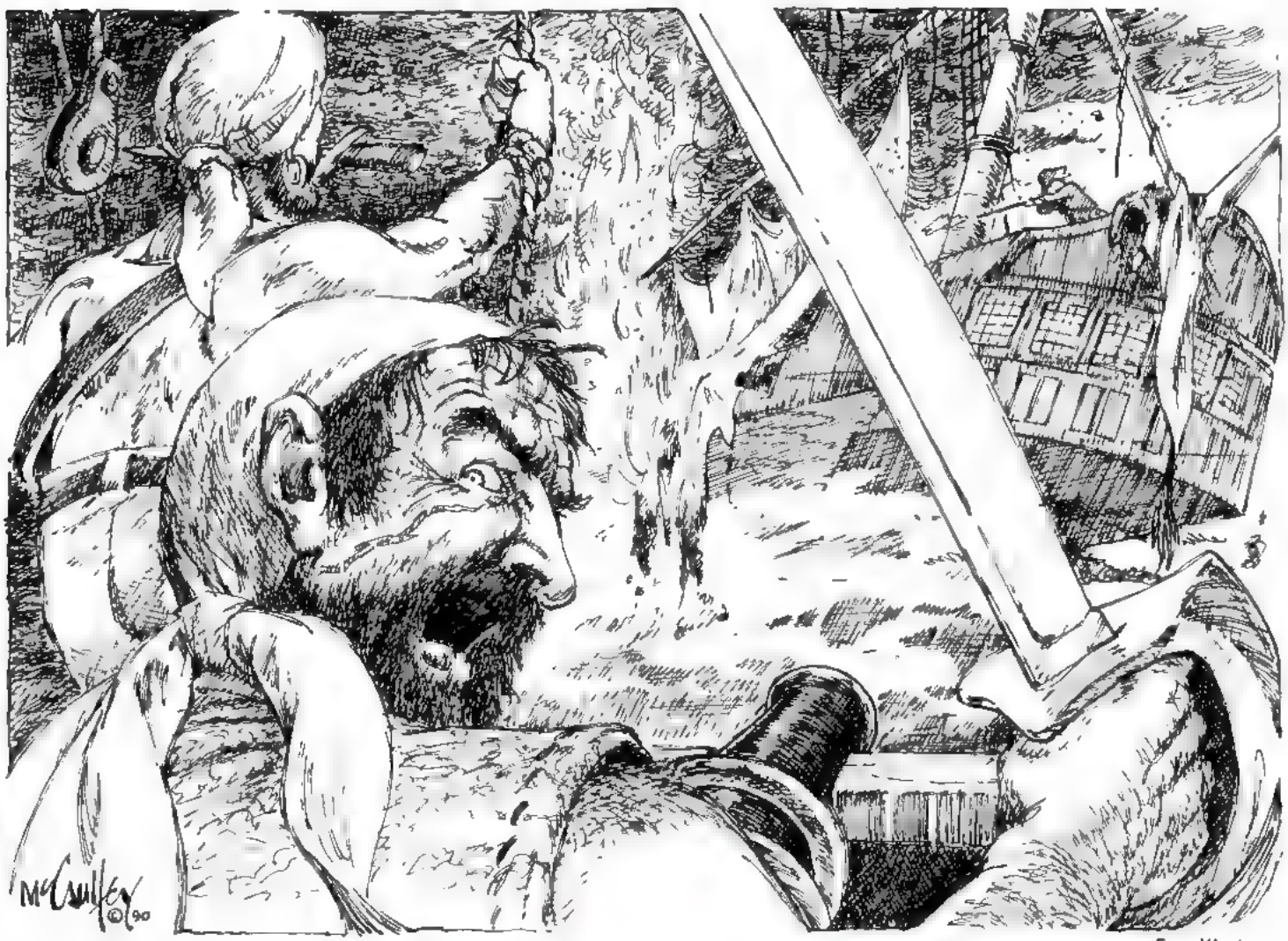
Whether you called it Galveston, as the residents did, or *Campeachy* or Snake Island, as the early buccaneers had dubbed it, it still added up to the same twenty-five-mile-long sliver of sand which guarded the entrance to Galveston Bay. In 1815 a herd of deer could be seen here or there, browsing on the lush grasses, but a more common sight was the thousands of cottonmouth snakes slithering on the shores.

A treeless expanse of windswept meadows and marshes, its single feature to warrant human habitation was its strategic location, which soon enabled the Island City to become the middleman of early Texas commerce. By 1850 Galveston had grown to 5,000 persons, and the sails of every nation found their way to its wharves.

Along Strand and Tremont streets, a few elegant carriages already evidenced a rising cotton aristocracy which collected the commodities of the Texas plantations and shipped them on to New York and Europe. There was an old world flavor during antebellum days as well, for along the waterfront and main thoroughfares, the German language of the immigrants was spoken almost as frequently as English.

Vestiges of the old pirate dominion also lingered on. The city dwellers sometimes pointed out old Jim Campbell when he brought over a wagon load of cotton or produce from Campbell's Bayou on the mainland. A legend in his own lifetime, old Jim had been Jean Lafitte's favorite sea captain during his younger days and was a respected citizen during his old age. Campbell's wife, Mary, had resided within the corsair commune throughout the five long years of the island's pirate history.

Stephen Churchill, another holdover from the privateering days, ran the ferry at the west end of the island. John



Lambert, the town's leading butcher, was a tall and powerful man, and like Campbell, both men were reluctant to discuss their careers as buccaneers in the Gulf of Mexico. Sometimes the trio reminisced over a schooner of beer in some remote corner of the Oyster Saloon, but always their conversations dwindled away to stony silence if some stranger approached.

But 'Crazy Ben' Dollivar was no stranger. Whenever he ambled up to their table, the greetings and handshakes were genuine, and conversation flourished. Ben had fought with them at the Battle of New Orleans and had shared their freebooter experiences afloat. And on Captain Campbell's last privateering voyage off the Mexican coast aboard the *Hotspur* in 1820, Ben had shared gunnery duties on a brass six-pounder with Jean Callistre and Charlie Cronea.

If it were Ben's turn to pay for the drinks, he always paid with a Spanish gold doubloon, a custom that had been witnessed in the Galveston saloons over a span of twenty years. He never seemed to know—or care—that the antique yellow coins were worth twelve silver dollars each. When others were present to witness his transactions, the bartenders usually were cautious and returned the correct change in coins, but if old Ben were alone and tipsy, they took full advantage of his condition to short-change him.

Ben's nickname resulted from the fact that most Galvestonians considered him 'tetched in the haid.' Being heavily scarred and uglier than sin, his facial expressions added fuel to their arguments. Folks said, too, that Ben sometimes muttered to himself or raved incoherently. If so, it was only noted on those few occasions when his money outlasted his drinking capacity.

Another cause for his nickname was the fact that Ben's life-style was different. He had no home and wanted none. Invariably he carried to town a single gold doubloon for drinks, but never a cent for clothes or other necessities. For all the years that many people had known him, he had always walked to town barefooted, wearing the same threadbare, homespun jeans held up by a short length of sail rope tied at the waist.

Other Galvestonians, such as Campbell, Churchill, or Lambert, worked at a trade and earned some measure of esteem in the community. But not so with Ben, who was esteemed and respected by none and, being the town drunk, was scoffed at by all.

You can wager, though, that every respectable mother's son or daughter among them shared a burning passion to know the source of Ben's doubloons.

When others were present to witness his transactions, the bartenders usually were cautious and returned the correct change in coins, but if old Ben were alone and tipsy, they took full advantage of his condition to short-change him.

Some said that he had located a cache of Lafitte's treasure near his hangout on the north coast of the island and somewhat west of town, but even his ex-pirate companions did not share the real secret. Others tried to pry it away from him with a few swigs of stout whiskey, but always Ben had a stock answer for his greedy interrogators. "Ah gits 'em," he would say, "from a big sea chest down in the *Hotspur's* bilge."

Reared an orphan, Ben knew almost nothing about his origins except that he was born in Georgia during the middle 1780s. He grew up on the plantation of a cruel uncle who, between floggings, worked him from daylight until dark in the cotton fields and then read the Bible to him by candlelight.

As a teenaged lad, he ran away and joined a company of militiamen who were pursuing a band of renegade Seminole Indians in the Florida Everglades. Later he went to sea for many years, and on one voyage he fought a duel with another sailor which left a six-inch saber scar extending from his right eye to a point behind his ear. It was the saber stroke, some Galvestonians said, which had left Ben's intellect impaired.

In 1810 Crazy Ben became an artilleryman under Gen. Simon Bolivar during a heroic but abortive attempt to free Venezuela from the Spanish yoke. After the revolution failed, while he was in hiding near New Cartegena, he first encountered pirate Jean Baptiste Callistre and joined the forces of Jean Lafitte, in whose service they both sailed for the next ten years and fought at the Battle of New Orleans.

Ben's long career afloat had taken him to almost every port on the Atlantic seaboard, the Caribbean, and the Gulf of Mexico. Long after his arrival at Galveston, he would disappear for several days or weeks at a time, but always he would return to his tent-like abode near the Island City. Folks sometimes said that he had gone to the source of his wealth to replenish his supply of doubloons, but if so, his journeys must have carried him to points as far away as New Orleans or elsewhere.

Perhaps it was his unconventional life-style that some editors considered newsworthy, for during the course of the nineteenth century, stories about Ben Dollivar appeared in newspapers as far away as the Detroit *Free Press*. In July 1847, the New Orleans *Delta* published the following account of him, under the headline "One of Lafitte's Crew":

> Night before last, one of the guardians of the public peace arraigned a little man named Benjamin Dollivar. The accused talked about boarding pikes and cutlasses, 'pokes or bags of silver in the hold, and diamonds and sacks of gold dust.

Dollivar's face looked like a piece of mahogany carved into human semblance. His nose is sharp and crooked enough to have served as a boat hook in an emergency, and his mouth, cheeks, and face are covered with a thick, dark beard. His little grey eyes twinkled in their sockets with a semi-piratical ferocity.

His forehead is scarred and full of wrinkles, and a seer might discover in them lines written by vice on the tablet of crime. The police know him to be one of the crew once under the command of the celebrated Lafitte, and if Prof. Ingresham had been in the reporter's seat, he would have worked him up into a splendid old pirate in a prize tale for one of our monthly magazines.

It's difficult to say whether Ben himself or Capt. Jim Campbell was more responsible for his survival to old age. Whenever he could, old Jim arranged for Crazy Ben to enjoy a hot meal between his usual rations of grog. And whenever Ben passed out in an alcoholic stupor, Campbell, until his death on May 5, 1856, would load him into his wagon and return him to his north shore hideaway to "sleep off the fumes."

But Ben himself possessed a stamina akin to a bull buffalo's, one which defied the rain, cold, and wind. Often during the month of January, the Galveston beachcombers would see him swimming in the cold surf along the north shore of the island. When hunger approached, he would usually drag a small seine in the surf to catch the few fish needed to sustain his health. Next to whiskey, his appetite craved raw oysters, but raking the shellfish loose from the nearby reef and prying them open was an exercise his aging energy had no lust for.

Ben's bayshore hovel was a lean-to, wooden framework, ten feet square, covered with sailcloth and opened at both ends to the north and south. Usually the southerly breezes tempered the hot breath of summer, but the chilling northers howled through its openings during the cold months. The seasons, however, meant very little to Ben, who seldom wore a shirt and never a coat, and consequently became as bronzed as an Indian.

When Ben was on the island, you could usually see an old whale boat turned upside down on the sands beside his hovel. When the breezes were right, he would sometimes hoist a mast and sloop sail and tack into the bay around Pelican Island. During those sojourns when he left the island, he would sail away in his whale boat to the source of his wealth on the mainland. Always he would return in a few days or weeks with a new supply of doubloons.

Sometimes when Crazy Ben returned to Galveston, he would find fresh potholes dug into the sands around his sailcloth hovel. Some townsman was always seeking the place where Ben buried his gold coins. Ben buried his coins, all right, the same as he hid whiskey jug, seine, sail, mast, shovel, and cooking utensils, but only at some unlikely spot where no burrowing gopher might uncover it.

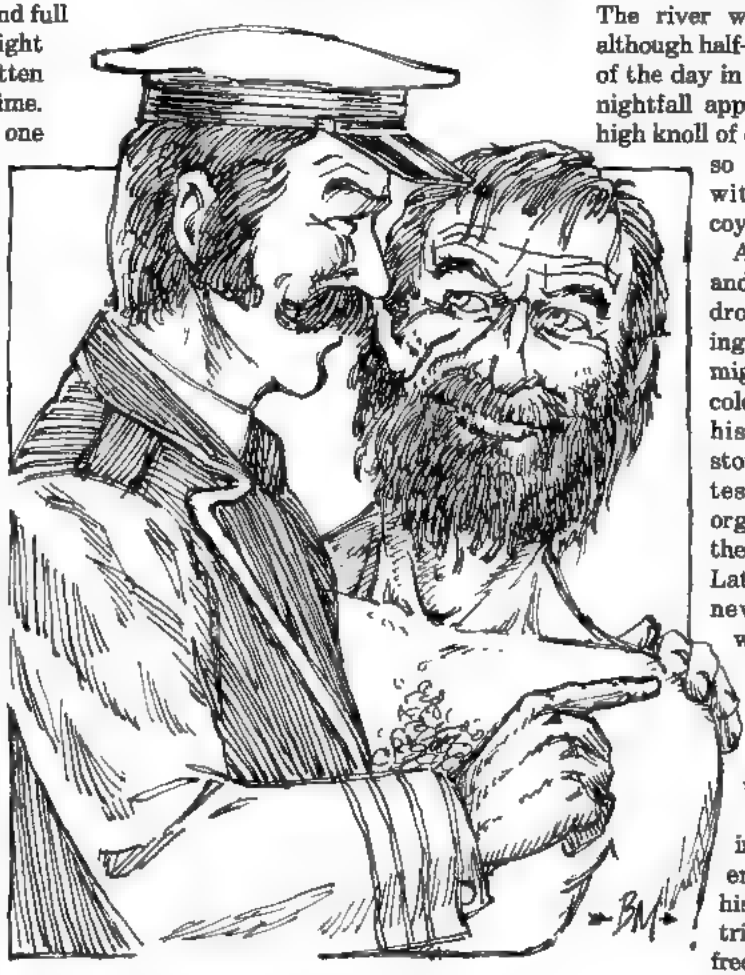
Ben's knack for taking care of himself is best portrayed in a story that he once told to Captain Campell. In January 1837, Ben was riding horseback through the Nueces River bottomlands en route to the ranch of an ex-pirate companion. The river was at flood stage, and although half-drunk, he had ridden most of the day in water a foot deep. When nightfall approached, he arrived at a high knoll of dry ground, a half-acre or so in size, which he shared with scores of wolves, coyotes, and rattlesnakes.

A sharp norther blew in, and the temperature soon dropped well below the freezing point. Knowing that he might otherwise perish of cold and exposure, Ben slit his horse's throat and stomach, removed the intestines and other vital organs, and climbed into the warm carcass to sleep. Later he claimed that he never knew for certain whether he slept for one night or two, but when he awoke two buzzards were pecking at his heels to let him know it was time to get up.

After Campbell's death in 1856, Ben grieved for his erstwhile companion, and his life-style changed. His trips to town became less frequent, and when he did go, he usually slept off his drunken slumbers in jail or in the alley behind the Oyster Saloon.

On one occasion, Steve Churchill invited Ben to spend his remaining years with him at the West Pass Ferry, but Dollivar declined, preferring instead to continue his solitude and simple existence on the north shore of the island. And so it remained until July 1858, the month that a strange, clipper-built yacht sailed into Galveston Bay and docked at Kuhn's Wharf.

To the numerous seamen and "wharf rats" who watched from the shore, the graceful vessel was a pearl-gray marvel of beauty. Everything about it smelled of newness. The masts and spars were painted white, and from its sharp prow and raked foremast there billowed forth



It seems that the young captain, who claimed to be Jean Lafitte's nephew, had promised to care for Ben and supply him generously with whiskey during his old age in exchange for the secret of the gold cache.

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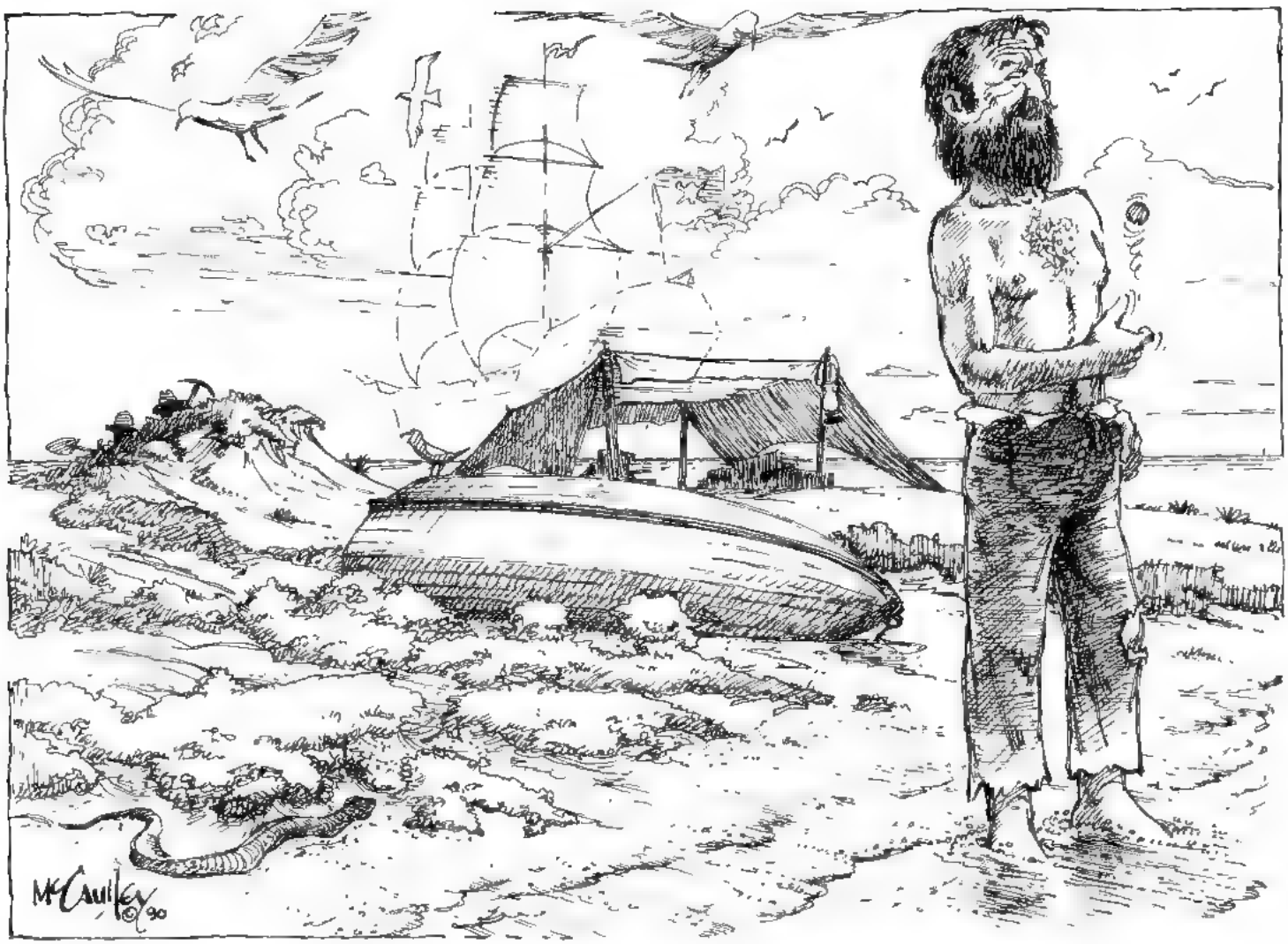

a huge balloon sail, or spinnaker, of a type never previously seen at Galveston Island. The name painted on its stern was *Sea Rover of New Orleans*.

In sharp contrast to the yacht, the crew consisted of four grizzled and bearded sailors of about age sixty and a young captain who stood tall and erect and wore a black mustache. Steve Churchill was among those who watched from the wharf, and for a fleeting moment, he thought he beheld his old buccaneer chieftain of 1820 returning to the island.

After docking, the young captain came ashore and inquired, "Can anyone help me locate old 'Crazy Ben' Dollivar?"

Churchill volunteered to lead the crewmen to Ben's hovel on the north shore, where he left them to converse alone. Several hours later, Ben and the strangers returned to the Dock 6 area, where they rented a small sloop and soon afterward sailed out of the harbor. One sailor remained aboard the yacht as its watchman.

For the remainder of Crazy Ben's story, we must rely heavily upon dockside gossip. An old longshoreman confided to Churchill a few days later that Ben and the strangers returned to Kuhn's Wharf and transferred two rusty old sea chests from the sloop to the decks of the yacht. The longshoreman added that as Dollivar and the sailors embarked on the sleek vessel, Ben told him that he planned to spend his last days in New Orleans. It seems that the young captain, who claimed to be Jean Lafitte's nephew, had promised to care for Ben and supply him generously with whiskey during his old age in exchange for the secret of the gold cache.

After the strangers hoisted anchor and sails and began the long tack out of the harbor, Ben stood for a long time on the stern of the *Sea Rover* and waved his sad farewells to his island home.

To the numerous "wharf rats" who watched from the shore, the graceful vessel was a marvel of beauty. Everything about it smelled of newness. The masts and spars were painted white, and from its sharp prow and raked foremast there billowed forth a huge balloon sail of a type never previously seen at Galveston Island.

But somehow, Steve Churchill was much less optimistic about the old pirate's future than the longshoreman was, or Ben himself for that matter. Churchill feared that as soon as the yacht reached the open sea, the sailors would murder old Dollivar and throw his body overboard. Whatever his fate, the citizens of Galveston never saw or heard from Crazy Ben again.

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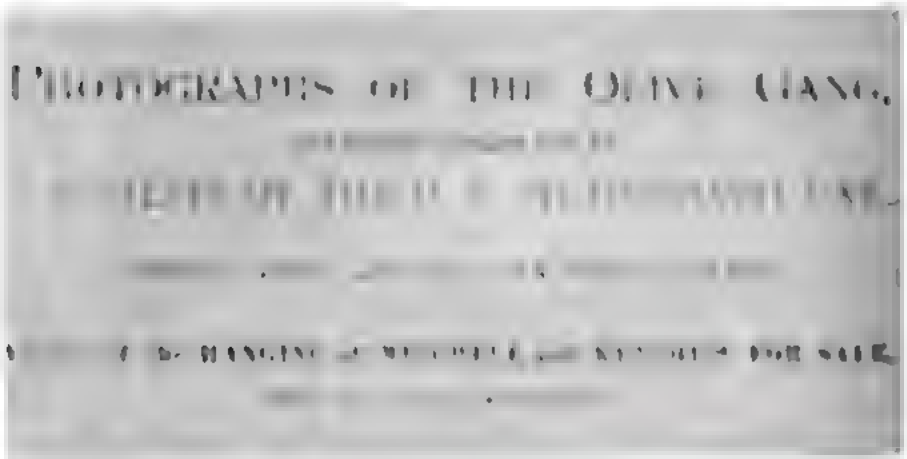
The Olive

Photo Courtesy of Harry Chrisman, *The Ladder of Rivers*, Sage Press, Denver, 1962

The so-called Olive gang and the lynching of Mitchell and Ketchum were sensationalized before the trial by an enterprising photographer. Above (clockwise from top): Print Olive, Bill Green, Jack Baldwin, Bion Brown, Barney Gillian, and Bob Olive. Below: The photographer's advertisement for the photos.



Probably no episode in Nebraska's history is more controversial than Print Olive's feud with Luther Mitchell and the Ketchum brothers. Since it involved ranchmen (the Olives) on one side and homesteaders (Mitchell and the Ketchums) on the other, it took on the aspects of a range war, colored suitably by whichever side was telling the tale. Most early accounts of the affair were written by homesteaders or their friends, so from the first that faction had the best of it.

As time went on, the grisly tale was retold often, each time painting the Olives blacker. Even posed pictures of the "Olive Gang," labeled as such by Custer County's traveling photographer, S.D. Butcher, in the 1880s, are now captioned as actual pictures of the Olives attacking their victims. A picture supposedly taken of Print Olive at the time of his imprisonment shows a rough looking man. It has been used often in later stories of the "man-burning case." One author wrote, "a rare photo of Print Olive depicts grim jaw and merciless eyes of man charged with torch murder of two homesteaders." The picture, however, has been utterly repudiated by the Olive family, who have furnished a true likeness of their ancestor.

Of the many books and articles written about the affair, only Harry Chrisman, after ten years of intensive research, has published in his *Ladder of Rivers* a documented story that treats the Olives fairly.

THE TALE begins in Texas, when Print and many other Texans came home from the war to find their state "broke." Almost the only means of making any money involved the gathering and marketing of cattle. The native longhorns had gone wild while the men were away at war, multiplying like rabbits in the thorny bush, unbranded and "skairy" as deer. By incredibly hard work, Print and his younger brothers, along with many other honest and reputable cowmen, gathered and branded sizable herds of the dogies, then trailed them north to Kansas markets.

But, as always, there were men on

By NELLIE SNYDER YOST

Story

hand who figured to profit from others' work; rustler outfits, by raiding the herds and running cattle into Mexico at night, could rework the brands and trail the herds north themselves. The Olive herds suffered greatly at the hands of such outfits, and gunplay and trials resulted.

After the Nebraska trouble, tales were told of the Olives having been "run out" of Texas because of cattle troubles, but research does not bear out such stories. The Olive family seems to have been on very good terms with other well-known and reputable cattlemen of their time, J.W. and Dudley Snyder among them.

In fact, it was to escape the violence of his home ranges that I.P. "Print" Olive and his brothers, Ira and Bob, moved north onto the unused range of Nebraska, only to find that the same old troubles had arrived there, too. At first, their cattle did well on the South and Middle Loup range, and they found the neighboring ranchmen friendly. But they were no sooner convinced that the move from Texas had been a good one than the same old problems reared their ugly head.

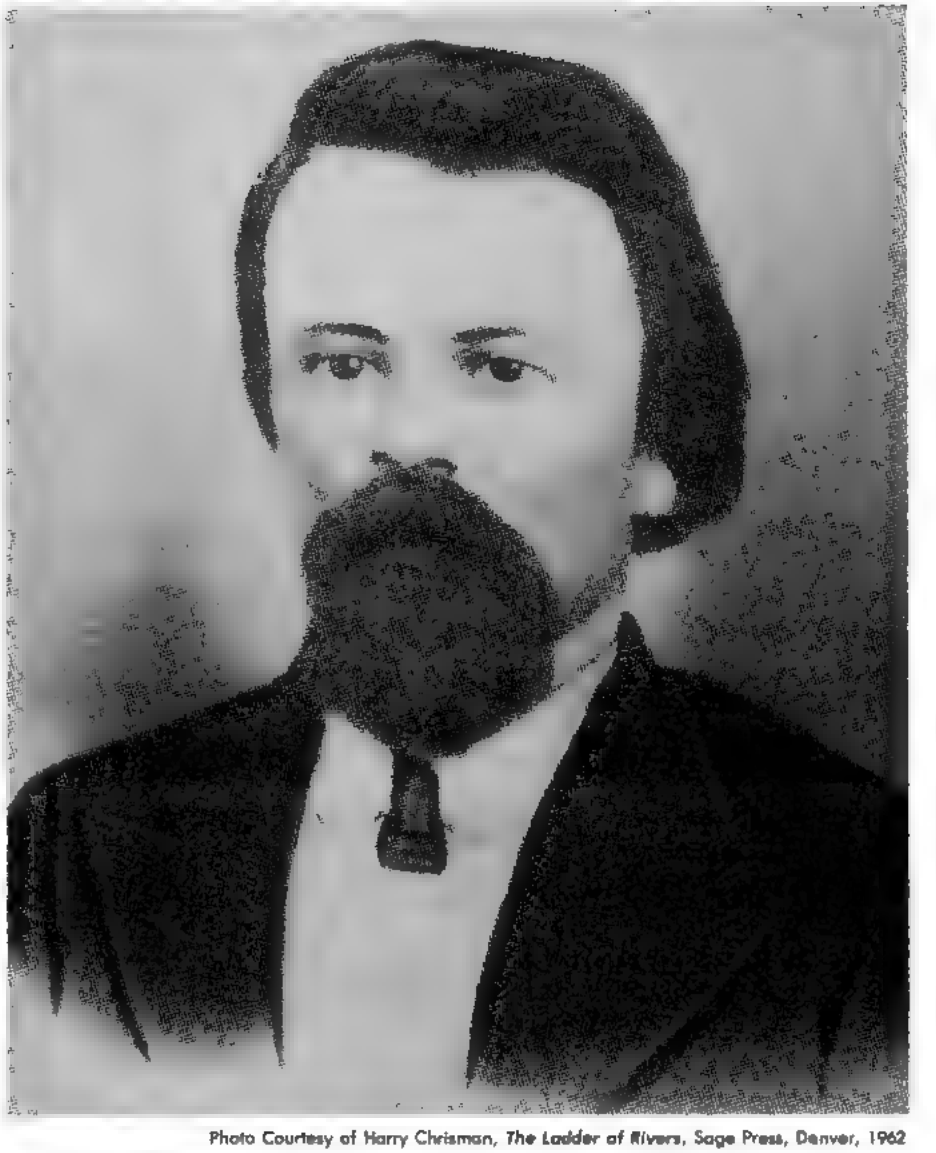


Photo Courtesy of Harry Chrisman, *The Ladder of Rivers*, Sage Press, Denver, 1962

I.P. "Print" Olive.

THE YEAR was 1878 and settlers in increasing numbers were moving into the eastern edges of the range country. The Olives' riders were soon reporting butchered range cattle, with only the hindquarters skinned out, on Clear Creek, on the eastern edge of the Olive range. All the cattlemen of the region were losing cattle, but since the biggest object makes the best target, the Olives were losing the most.

The trail soon led to a group of five men: Manley Caple, Luther Mitchell, and the three Ketchum brothers, Ami, Lawrence, and one whose first name is not known. Young Caple, described as "a physical athlete, daring and generous, with an insatiable passion for gambling, was always getting into trouble, and always got out by getting someone else in." Mitchell was an older man with a family. The Ketchums were young and unmarried. None of them owned any cattle, yet they had been seen on the roads near Grand Island, Kearney, and Hastings with wagonloads of fresh beef.

The next morning, Print Olive and several of his men rode to meet the carriage. There, convinced by all the talk he had heard that justice would not be done in the courts, he shot Mitchell and hanged both prisoners from a tree in Devil's Gap canyon. The party then returned to the Olive ranch.

Few ranchmen objected to hungry homesteaders butchering a critter now and then for their own use, but *selling* the beef was another matter. Then a couple of Olive cowboys caught young Caple penning some Olive steers near Sweetwater, just over the line in neighboring Buffalo County. They took the steers home and deposited Caple with Cap Anderson, the Buffalo County sheriff. Under questioning, Caple named Ami Ketchum as his helper.

A little later another Sweetwater settler, Jim Roberts, was caught with some Olive hides. When brought before Judge Hutchinson's court at Sweetwater to answer the charge of theft, Roberts' friend, Judge Aaron Wall, showed up to defend him. Wall was another mysterious character. A resident of Buffalo County, he had somehow gotten himself elected a judge of Sherman County, just across the line to the north. In light of events that soon came to pass, many believed that Judge Wall himself was the mastermind behind the extensive

cattle thievery. At any rate he was clever, and Bob Olive referred to one of his sessions as "a court of coyotes with a lobo on the bench."

By summer matters were fast coming to a head. Ami Ketchum was boasting that he could outshoot or outfight any Olive alive—and cattle were still disappearing. Of the three Olive brothers, Print was the leader, Ira the quiet, speculative one, and Bob the firebrand. Bob had killed in Texas, in proven self-defense. He was suspected in another shooting, but doubtless would have been cleared if he had returned to Texas to stand trial. That he was hotheaded and arrogant seems evident, but he was also brave and determined to put a stop to the rustling that the law seemed unable, or unwilling, to handle.

Print, still hoping to avoid the kind of shooting war that had caused so much grief in Texas, had made several trips to Wyoming the preceding winter to investigate the cattlemen's association that seemed to be working well there. He came home to ride over his own territory, lining up the honest cattlemen for membership in a similar organization. Before spring was over a large group of ranchmen met at the log cabin on the Young ranch at the mouth of Spring Creek, temporary seat of the very new county, to organize the Custer County Livestock Association. Of the officers elected, Print was president and Judge E.J. Boblits was treasurer. The purpose of the organization was "to promote the cattle industry and protect herds from cattle rustlers and those engaged in slaughtering 'slow elk.'"

That fall, Bob Olive, returning from a trip to Texas, got off the train in Kearney. In a pen beside the tracks he saw seventy head of Olive cattle. On checking with Sheriff Anderson he learned that no Olive men had been in town lately, and when they found the man who claimed the cattle, a packing house buyer, he showed them a release signed by various parties, including Ami Ketchum, Manley Caple, and Print Olive.

THE PAPER WAS a dead giveaway, for Bob knew that his brother signed his name only as I.P. Olive, never Print, which was only a nickname. Besides, Print was in Cheyenne and had been since before the date written on the release.

Bob was furious, and the sheriff made what turned out to be a fatal mistake. He deputized Bob to serve a warrant for Ketchum's arrest. Print had sworn out the warrant before he left for Wyoming, but Anderson had put off making the arrest until he could find a man capable of pulling it off, for he knew Ketchum was a dangerous man. The one thing he didn't know was that Bob, known in Nebraska as Bob Stevans (the name he had adopted when he left Texas with a murder charge hanging over him), foreman of the Olive outfit, was an Olive.

Now Bob, the warlike Olive, eager for a showdown with Ketchum, was sworn in. The sheriff advised him to take plenty of deputized helpers along. The new deputy then rode for Luther Mitchell's sod house, where Ketchum was then staying. He took along two of his riders, Armstrong and Beeton, to side him.

The date was November 27, 1878. Bob and his men concealed themselves behind a hill some distance from the Mitchell house. From their vantage point they could see Ketchum snubbing a borrowed bull to a wagon in the yard. Bob told Beeton to ride into the place and ask Ketchum, who was also a blacksmith, if he would shoe his horse. Beeton thus could find out if Ketchum was armed and if Mitchell was at home.

Beeton soon came back behind the hill to report that Ketchum said he did not have time to shoe a horse that day. He was wearing a six-shooter and had a rifle in the wagon. Bob, Armstrong, and Beeton then rode down to the house, guns drawn, and ordered Ketchum to surrender to arrest. Instead the homesteader drew his own gun and fired. Bob fired at the same time, breaking Ketchum's arm. All the men were firing by then, which brought Mitchell running from the house, a Winchester

Nebraska State Historical Society, Butcher Collection

The Mitchell homestead soddy.

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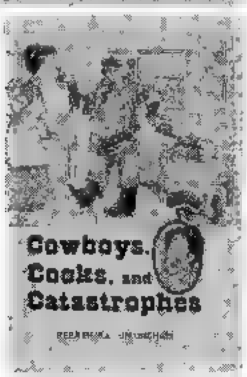

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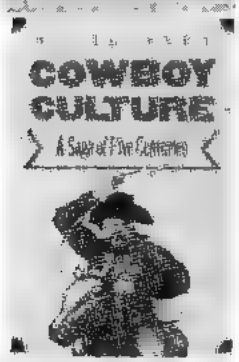

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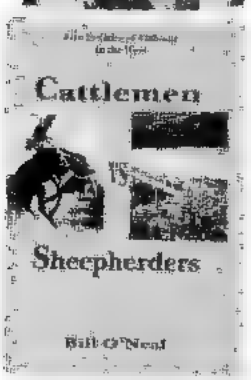

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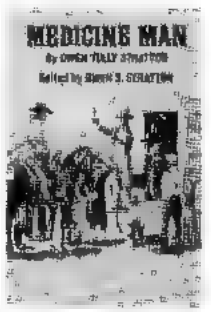

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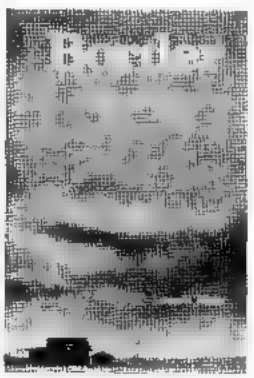

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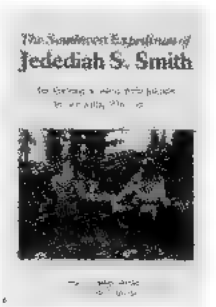

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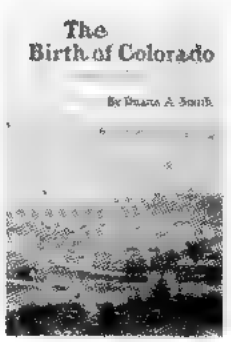

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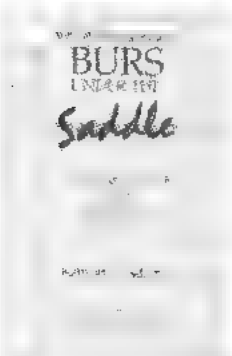

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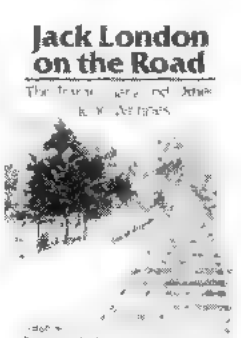

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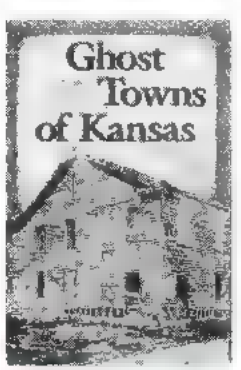

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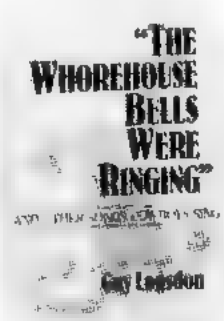

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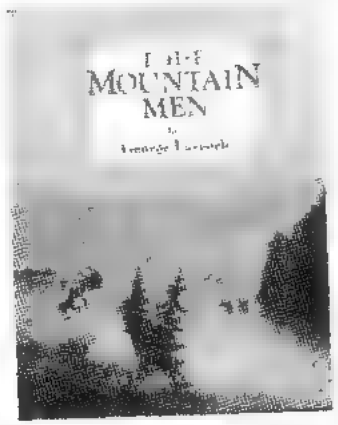

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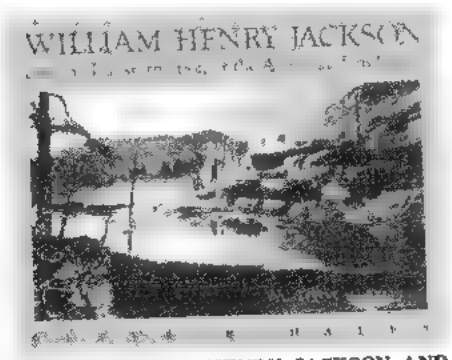

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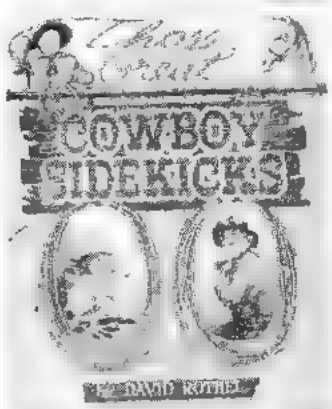

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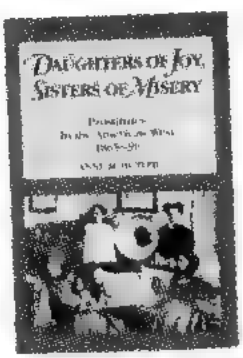

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in his hands. Mitchell fired, striking Bob in the side. Olive, supported in his saddle by Armstrong and Beeton, turned and rode away.

As soon as the three deputies were out of sight, Ketchum helped Mitchell load his family and a few belongings into the wagon; then they all pulled out, heading for Loup City and Judge Wall. That mysterious official agreed that his visitors would be in danger if the Olives found them, but instead of detaining them under the protection of the law, he hid them in the home of a minister some ten miles distant.

Three days after the shooting, Bob Olive died on his twenty-fourth birthday. Print, reached by telegram in Cheyenne, hurried home with an offer of a $700 reward for the capture of Mitchell and Ketchum. Olive men had already ridden to Mitchell's place and burned the roof off the soddy when they found no one there. They had next gone to Judge Wall's, but too late to find their quarry.

It was Sheriff Crew of Howard County and Sheriff Letcher of Merrick County who apprehended the fugitives at the Reverend Baker's farm on Oak Creek, arrested them, and took them to St. Paul where an attorney, Thomas Darnell, was engaged to represent them. The suspects were then taken to the jail in Kearney, a fairly large town, after which all the sheriffs in the case began to quarrel over the reward money. The arresting sheriffs believed they should have it; the Keith County sheriff, Barney Gillan, to whom Print had given the warrant for the arrest of his brother's killer, declared that he should have it. At that point Print refused to pay anyone until the prisoners were returned to Custer County.

In the end, on the afternoon of December 9, Sheriff Gillan, assisted by Phil DuFran, a Custer County deputy sheriff who ranched on Cottonwood Creek, brought Mitchell and Ketchum to Plum Creek on the train. At the depot they were loaded into a light, two-seated carriage to be taken to the county seat (the Young ranch) for trial before Judge Boblits the next day. The rig headed north out of town, followed by an Olive ranch supply wagon and a Plum Creek attorney, C.W. McNamar, in a buggy. McNamar told the officers in charge of the prisoners that he had been asked by the St. Paul attorney, Darnell, to keep an eye on the pair, since it was feared the "Olive gang" would attempt to kill them.

Print Olive, in the crowd that met the train, talked briefly with Gillan, who told him he looked for the prisoners to apply for a change of venue and be tried in a farming community, where cattlemen were looked on as minions of the devil. They probably would soon go free. Deeply troubled, Print picked up his mail, then stopped at Bill Green's saloon, where he heard more talk to the effect that Mitchell and Ketchum would never be convicted. A little later, as Print prepared to leave, Bill Green and his friend, hotel keeper Jack Baldwin, invited themselves to go with him. Baldwin brought a gallon jug of whiskey, and the three headed north on horseback in the winter dusk.

The horsemen overtook the carriage about twenty miles north of town. Print talked with the officers a few minutes, arranging to meet them at a certain fork in the road the next morning. The officers and their charges spent the rest of the night at the nearby Dick James ranch. Print and the others went on to the Olive ranch.

The next morning, Print and several of his men rode to meet the carriage. There, convinced by all the talk he had heard that justice would not be done in the courts, he shot Mitchell and hanged both prisoners from a tree in Devil's Gap canyon. The party then returned to the Olive ranch, with Green and Baldwin still tagging along.

After dinner, Green and Baldwin, by now quite drunk, tied their half-empty jug on a saddle and started back to town.

At that point, according to S.D. Butcher's account of the incident, "The bodies of the two unfortunate men [Mitchell and Ketchum] were found about 3 o'clock in the afternoon of the following day by a party of men, among whom were Captain McNamar [the attorney had lost track of the carriage in

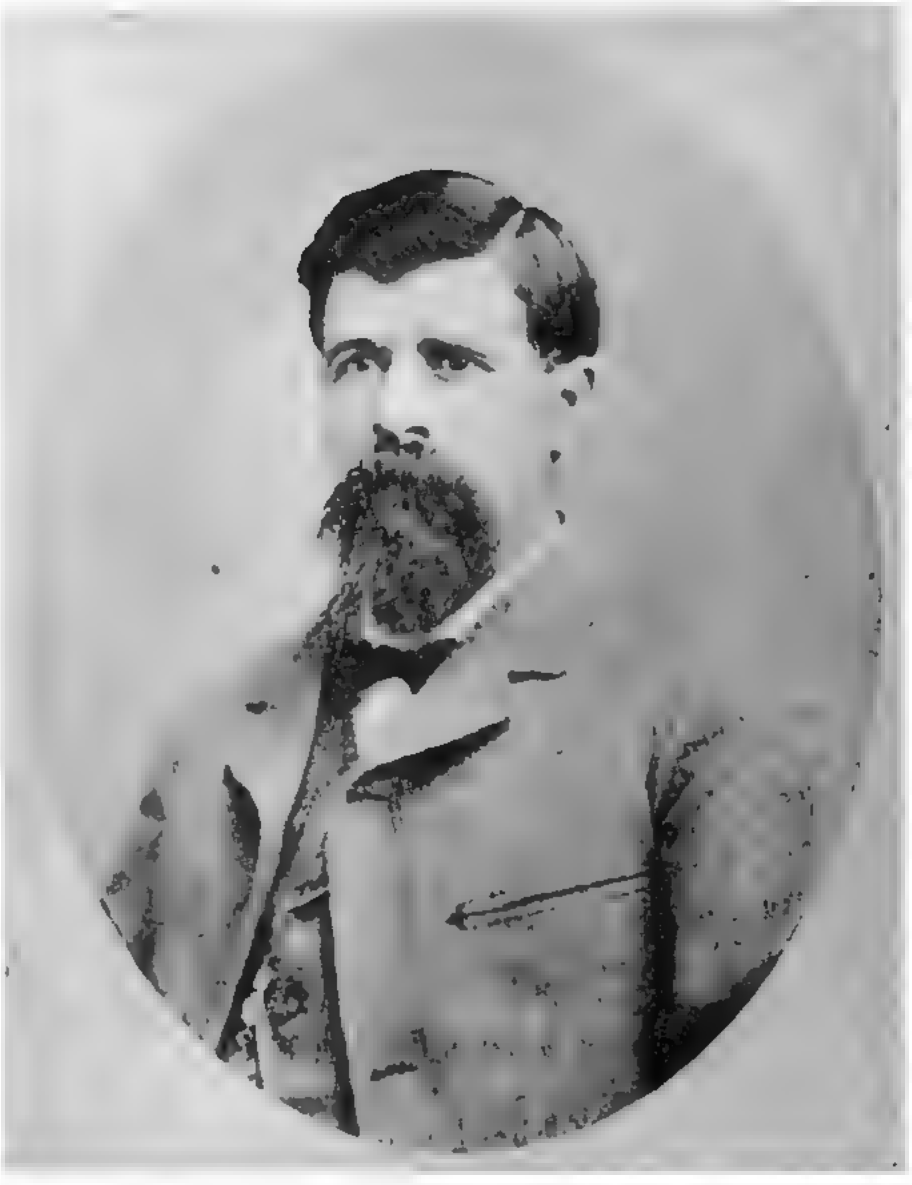

Photo Courtesy of Harry Chrisman, *The Ladder of Rivers*, Sage Press, Denver, 1962

I.W. Olive

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Devil's Gap, where Mitchell and Ketchum were lynched.

the darkness the night before and returned to town], Anton Abel, Louis Wamagan, Al Wise, County Judge Boblits and perhaps others. When found the bodies were frightfully burned, that of Ketchum still hanging to the limb while that of Mitchell was resting on the ground, the rope . . . having either been broken or burned in two."

It was this last act in the tragedy, the man-burning, that was to be sensationalized, charged to the "Olive gang" and enlarged on through the years, forever blackening a good name. Every few years a new writer falls gleefully upon the old stories, refurbishes them, and sells a new version to some magazine. No longer bothering to "suppose" anything, as in the early versions, writers now flatly state that Print Olive burned the bodies and dwell upon the utter depravity of the bloodthirsty cattlemen and their friends. They forget that Bob Olive, a bona fide law officer at the time of his death, was killed in the line of duty. By the same token the thieves—Mitchell, Ketchum, and their cohorts—have become innocent settlers, persecuted by the arrogant Olives, determined to drive them off their range.

At the time of the killings, most Custer County residents believed Baldwin and Green burned the bodies. Even Butcher, whose story is sympathetic to the settler faction, wrote "it is generally supposed that these two men, crazed with drink and fired with the thought of revenge . . resolved to put the finishing touch on the terrible night's work by pouring the contents of their liquor flasks over the hanging bodies and setting them on fire, as they had to pass by that road to get back to Plum Creek. It does not appear . . . that Olive was a party to, or had any knowledge of, this part of the crime."

William Gaslin, a New Englander, had been elected district judge of the western half of Nebraska in 1875. A sour-mouthed, gimlet-eyed man, he presided at sixty-eight murder trials during his sixteen years in office and it was said that in tough towns like Sidney and Ogallala he mounted the bench armed with a Winchester as well as legal documents. At any rate he prosecuted with a vengeance and took pride in securing convictions, even though the supreme court overturned most of them.

For Gaslin, the Olive case seems to have had political implications. Because of the "man-burning," it was front page news all across the state and beyond, and the man who could bring it to a successful conclusion (conviction) might even step into the governor's chair. Since sentiment in Custer County was strongly in favor of the Olive faction, Gaslin set about remedying that by shifting the prisoners from the Kearney jail to the state penitentiary in Lincoln, reporting it as a necessary move in order to keep the Olive's "lawless gang" from breaking their employer out of jail and thereby spilling more innocent blood.

The judge next declared Custer County not yet legally organized, then designated Hastings, in Adams County and 100 miles from the scene of the crimes, as the place of trial. He then maneuvered a $10,000 appropriation through the legislature to provide for the hire of the most expensive legal talent available, the money to be paid out only on vouchers signed by himself. Outside the cattle country, newspapers

throughout Nebraska and neighboring states reported every move.

The trial began in April 1879, with Gen. C.J. Dilworth, John M. Thurston, and several other attorneys, including Judge Wall and C.W. McNamar, lined up for the state. Judge Beach Hinman of North Platte and Francis G. Hamer of Kearney were the foremost attorneys in the Olive camp.

By then the "man-burner case" had become so famous that reporters and spectators came from hundreds of miles around. Whole families drove long distances to Hastings and stayed for days, sleeping in or under their wagons while they waited to see how the case came out. Hastings' restaurants and hotels had never had it so good, and there was not an empty bedroom in the town. City people stared in wonder at the spurred, booted, and armed cowboys and cattlemen, drawn to the trial to see how one of their own would fare in the farmers' court. Their presence gave Gaslin another idea, and he promptly persuaded the Adams County sheriff to send the following curious telegram to Gov. Albinous Nance in Lincoln:

SEND COMPANY OF TROOPS IMMEDIATELY. THE CRITICAL TIME HAS ARRIVED. DO NOT FEEL SAFE WITH SUCH GUARDS AS I CAN GET. SEND TROOPS FROM OTHER POINTS THAN THIS COUNTY FOR REASONS YOU KNOW. HAVE THEM THERE BY SPECIAL TRAIN AT NOON TOMORROW [Friday]. FOR GOD'S SAKE DON'T FAIL.—S.L. Martin Sheriff.

By the words "for reasons you know," Gaslin meant "to avoid criticism from local citizens," who knew that no danger, violence, or anarchy threatened the town. In due time 100 soldiers (their expenses paid from the legislature's $10,000 appropriation) came to stand, arms ready, around the jail and to set up their Gatling gun, aimed at the doorway of the building where the trial was held. Newspapermen made much of the necessity of protecting the town from the warlike cattlemen—and Gaslin achieved the result he wanted.

At the trial Judge Gaslin refused to let the defense mention the murder of Bob Olive by Mitchell and Ketchum while attempting to perform his duty as an officer of the law or the fact that they had stolen cattle from the defendants. At the same time he permitted the prosecution to picture the murdered pair as innocent homesteaders and persecuted settlers, thus destroying Olive's defense of justifiable homicide.

To Gaslin's disappointment, at the end of the long trial the jury found Olive and Fisher guilty only of murder in the second degree, and not guilty of the burning. As they left the courtroom, defense attorney Hinman told the jury, "You have sorted through a barrel of hog-wash and come out with clean hands."

The judge sentenced both men to life imprisonment at hard labor and assessed the costs of the trial, a reported $60,000, to Print Olive. But Hamer and Hinman, not satisfied that justice had been done, appealed the case to the supreme court on the grounds that the Adams County court lacked jurisdiction in the case. Nearly two years later the appeal was heard and the two men were released for trial in Custer County before Judge Boblits. No accusers appearing against them, the judge dismissed the case, and noted the same in a little pocket notebook amid entries for hay, barbed wire, and other expenses for his ranch in the Loup Valley.

No longer bothering to "suppose" anything, as in the early versions, writers now flatly state that Print Olive burned the bodies and dwell upon the depravity of the bloodthirsty cattlemen and their friends. They forget that Bob Olive, a law officer at the time of his death, was killed in the line of duty.

"The dark mooded Print" and similar descriptions of Olive, set down by the various writers of his story do not seem to fit the man who was said by his neighbors on the Loup to have been friendly and sociable, a man who liked to visit and dance. The Farritors found him kindly and generous. The Rankins said, "One couldn't find a better man to do business with. He'd do what he said he would, and there'd be no trouble if others did the same." Gaston and Humphrey wrote of him, "He was a good sort of man, very generous and courteous to those with whom he was on good terms, but an implacable enemy and adept in the use of firearms."

Nevertheless, Print Olive paid a high price for taking the law in his own hands that morning in Devil's Gap. Not only would he forever bear the ugly and undeserved label of "man-burner," but the shocking cost of the trial cut deeply into his reserves. In addition, the winter following his release from prison was the terrible one of deep snows and bitter cold. Cattle everywhere died by the thousands and the Olives' losses were no less than those of their neighbors.

The following summer Print and Ira Olive gathered the remnants of their once large herds and divided them. Ira remained in Nebraska and lived out his life in Lexington (formerly Plum Creek), a prominent and respected man. Print moved to a ranch on the Sawlog Creek in Kansas. He developed some business interests in Trail City, a town on the Kansas-Colorado line, and there, late in the summer of 1886, he was shot down by Joe Sparrow, a former employee to whom he had loaned some money, as he came through the door of his saloon. He was forty-six years old.

Print Olive's biographers have had a field day with his death, too. Some have intimated that he was killed by Ami Ketchum's brother, who had, they said, dogged his trail through the years since his release from prison to that day in Trail City. Another wrote, "In the afternoon Olive confronted Sparrow in the saloon. The shooting melee started when Print reached for his gun and ended with the brawling cattleman fatally wounded." A recent rehash of the story ends, "Under an assumed name he (Print) was said to have gone to Colorado. There, during a saloon fight, he was shot and killed by an unknown assailant believed to be a relative of Ami Ketchum."

Harry Chrisman's research reveals that Print was in his shirtsleeves and unarmed at the time of his death, and that he had not worn his gun in Trail City at all that summer because, as a promise to his wife, it was packed in his trunk at home.

Sparrow, tried three times for the murder, was convicted at the first trial; granted a change of venue for the second, which ended in a hung jury; and at the third, with the expense to the state mounting rapidly, acquitted. A chronically broke individual, Sparrow died in Mexico in 1924.

And Judge Gaslin—well, he never made it to the governor's chair.

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Sagebrush

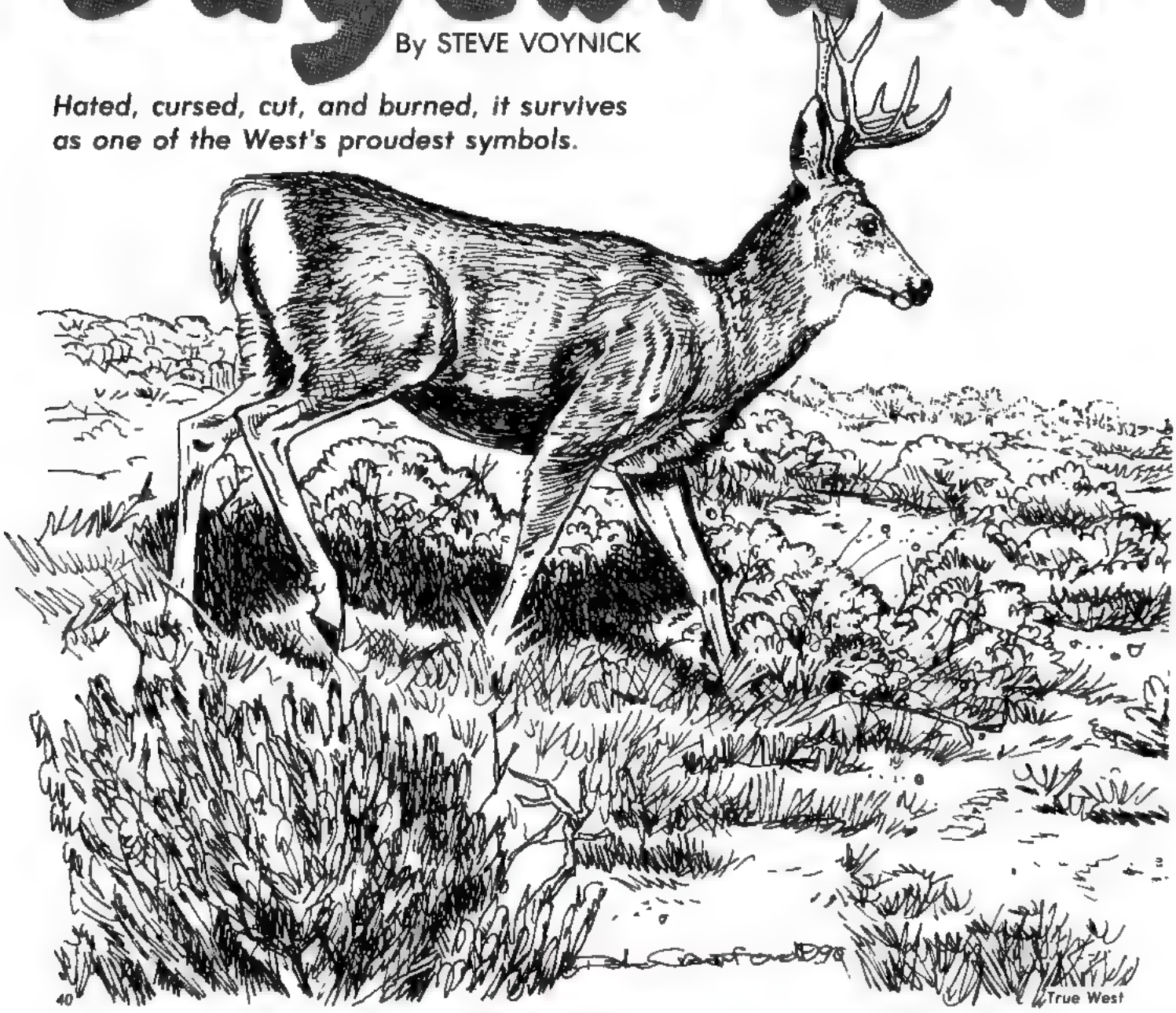
By STEVE VOYNICK

Hated, cursed, cut, and burned, it survives as one of the West's proudest symbols.

When America moved west, many pioneers were dismayed to find endless expanses of land barren except for countless millions of hardy shrubs with gnarled, woody trunks and upright branches bearing small, drab gray leaves. One Oregon Trail emigrant crossing Wyoming in 1844 noted in his journal, "Legions of leagues are covered with a wild growth of sage which seems designed by nature for nothing more than to feed a variety of feathered family known as 'sagecocks.'"

Westerners' relationship with sagebrush got off to a bad start. But, somehow, the tough, prolific shrub proved to be an enigma: although universally disliked, sagebrush was destined to become one of the West's most enduring and familiar symbols, and sagebrush country would become a classic setting for western novels and movies. In time, sagebrush would even earn a grudging respect from its biggest enemy—cattlemen, who for a century tried their best to eradicate it.

The twenty-odd woody species of sagebrush belong to the genus *Artemisia*. Artemisia grows worldwide, but nowhere in greater profusion than in the American West. The West's largest and most common species is big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), which can live well over 100 years and grow to heights of over ten feet. Unlike most other western flora, sagebrush has a remarkable range, growing equally well at elevations of only 1,000 feet or at 11,500 feet at timberline in the Sierra and the Rockies. Found from southern Alaska to Mexico, and from the western



edge of the Great Plains to the Pacific, sagebrush covers over 100 million acres of the West.

Although common, sagebrush is frequently confused with similar-looking shrubs like rabbitbrush, saltbush, and bitterbrush. Names further the confusion. In *Riders of the Purple Sage*, Zane Grey was referring not to sagebrush, but to an unrelated, purple-flowering member of the mint family common in the Southwest. Nor does sagebrush have anything to do with the familiar kitchen spice, which is another mint family herb.

With an extensive root system to absorb water, sagebrush is superbly adapted to thrive in the West's typically long, cold winters and hot, dry summers. As an evergreen, sagebrush produces two sets of leaves annually. Since photosynthesis can be carried out at even the low temperatures of winter and early spring, sagebrush is an important food source for wildlife during that critical period. Sagebrush provides the bulk of the diet for the pronghorn and sage grouse, and is often vital for winter survival of mule deer.

The most unique property of sagebrush, especially big sagebrush, is a strong, pungent, yet rather pleasant and fresh fragrance caused by camphor-like hydrocarbon compounds and aromatic oils called monoterpinoids. Crushing sagebrush leaves in the fingers releases the full fragrance which, once savored, is not soon forgotten.

Unlike the white pioneers, Indians had long made good use of sagebrush. Paiutes and Shoshones, masters of survival in the harsh Great Basin environment, used its brittle branches as a thatch for simple shelters and wove its stringy bark into sandals and loincloths.

More than a few settlers experimented with fermenting mixed mashes of grains and sagebrush leaves, hoping to distill something passing for absinthe. Their results tasted so unimaginably terrible that any dreams of converting sagebrush into a potable liquor died on the vine.

In such treeless regions, large sagebrush trunks, often a foot thick, were valuable as a hot, fast-burning firewood.

For some tribes, sagebrush was a supplemental food source. Paiutes, Shoshones, and Utes collected and consumed sagebrush galls—tender, marble-sized sections of branch tissue swollen by fungi. California's Cahuilla Indians ground the tiny sagebrush seeds into a nutritious *pinole*, or meal. Small amounts of dried, crushed sagebrush leaves were also used as a spice for corn dishes.

Sagebrush's strong, camphor-like fragrance made it a natural candidate for many medicinal purposes, such as a source of incense and vapor in sweat lodges. Placed on heated rocks, bundles of wet sagebrush leaves generated a dense, vapor-laced steam that was inhaled by "patients" until they literally had to be carried from the lodges and revived. The vaporized hydrocarbons apparently were quite effective in clearing inflamed sinus passages and stimulating profuse sweating that helped break fevers. Extracts from sagebrush leaves were made into a variety of teas and tonics, all dreadfully bitter, but of considerable benefit in purging the digestive system of intestinal parasites and in relieving constipation and menstrual cramps.

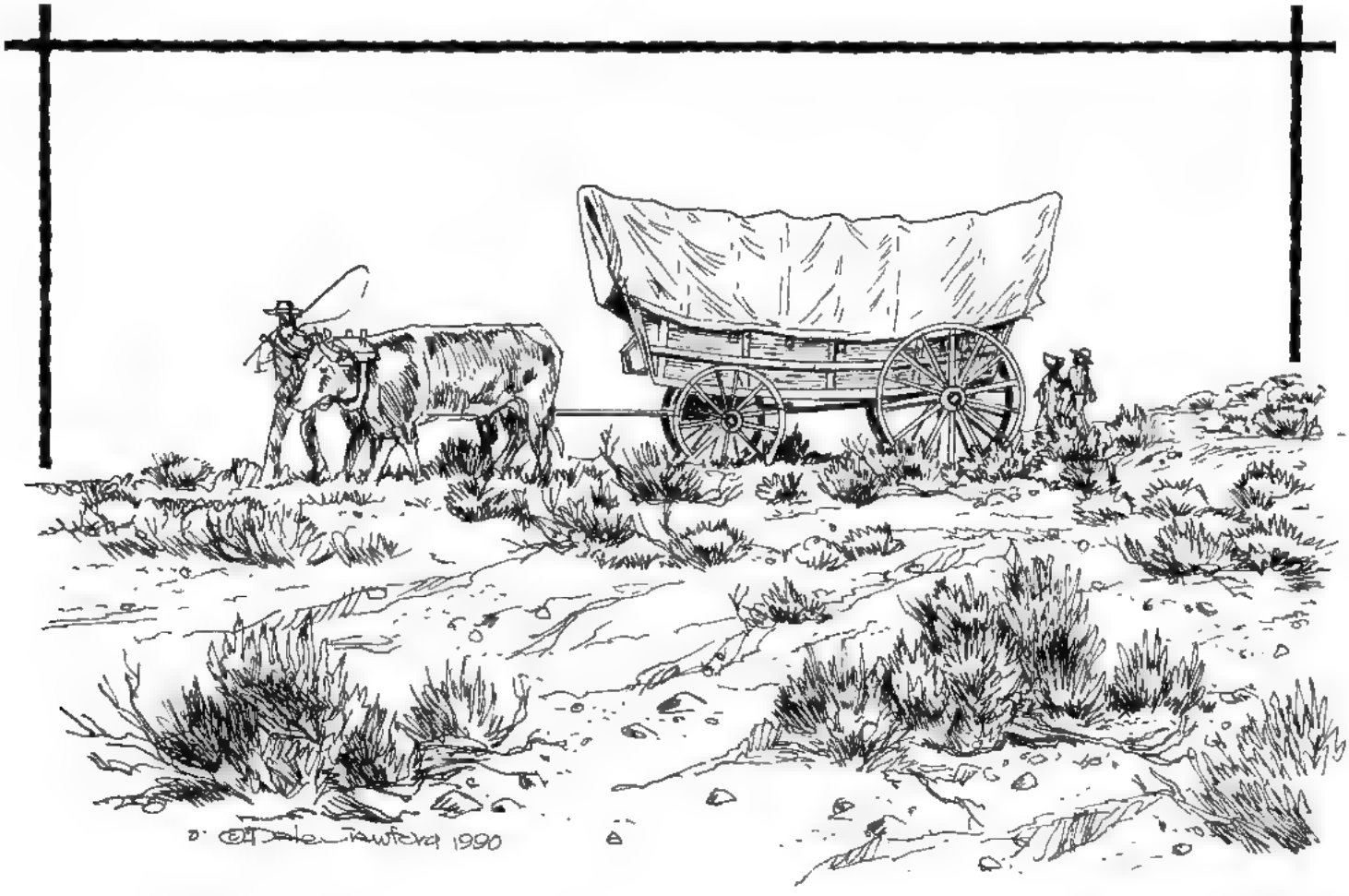
If white settlers did not find similar uses for sagebrush, it was not because they did not try. Some noted with great interest the similarities between big sagebrush and a European variety called wormwood, so named for its proven effectiveness in expelling intestinal parasites. But wormwood had a greater claim to fame: it was a key ingredient in absinthe, one of the most powerful, mind-altering alcoholic liquors ever concocted. Light green and slightly cloudy, absinthe relied on a very high alcohol content to keep its diverse ingredients, which included sagebrush hydrocarbons, dissolved. So great was its potency, and so severe its effects on the nervous system that, by the late 1800s, most western nations had followed the lead of France and banned both the manufacture and importation of absinthe. More than a few creative settlers experimented with fermenting mixed mashes of grains and sagebrush leaves, hoping to distill something passing for absinthe. Their results tasted so unimaginably terrible that any dreams of converting sagebrush into a potable liquor—probably fortunately for the West—died on the vine.

Some Nevada settlers were similarly disappointed with a sagebrush extract claimed by the Paiutes to be a hair restorer. Given the rarity of bald Paiutes, its effectiveness seemed assured. Sensing commercial opportunity, some entrepreneurs sold the stuff by the case as fast as they could bottle it. The venture lasted only a few months until disgruntled customers, their heads reeking of sagebrush and still bald, returned to demand refunds.

THE BIG problem with sagebrush was not what it was, or what it could be, but what it was not. Dana Yensen, in his *A Grazing History of Southwest Idaho*, said it best when he wrote, "It wasn't green and it wasn't grass." Ranchers knew that cattle, given the choice of sagebrush or grass, always headed straight for the grass.

After the first big herds of cattle appeared in the West, the lure of quick profits led to severe overgrazing. Cattlemen were appalled to see the rangelands recover—not with cattle-fattening grass, but with the hated sagebrush. That led to a widespread misconception that sagebrush grew where grass had once grown and could grow again. Cattlemen, long used to range wars, stock wars, and sheep wars,

Illustrated by DALE CRAWFORD



prepared to fight what would be their longest and most difficult war, the one against sagebrush. At first they attacked "that damned weed" by burning it or plowing it under. In recent decades, their descendants kept up the war with more modern, but equally unsuccessful methods—chemical spraying, mechanical shredding, and bulldozers dragging heavy chains that tore the sagebrush out by the roots. Once cleared, they replanted the land with preferred grasses, usually crested wheatgrass. Then botanists were able to tell cattlemen why their war against sagebrush had been a lost cause: the hydrocarbon chemicals produced by sagebrush impregnated the surrounding ground to actually inhibit the growth of competing plant species. Despite a century of effort to eradicate sagebrush, many botanists believe there is more sagebrush growing in the West today than when the first settlers arrived.

Today, sagebrush is not just part of the West's flora, but part of its history and lore. The 1862 border dispute between the state of California and the territory of Nevada is still known as the "Sagebrush War." In Utah's political battles of the 1880s, Mormon Church control of the territory was called "Sagebrush Democracy." In the 1930s, western movies were fondly known as "sagebrush sagas." One of the most popular was a 1933 film starring a young John Wayne; although it had nothing whatever to do with sagebrush, its title—*Sagebrush Trail*—clearly proclaimed its western theme. Even a contemporary political movement to shift more federal power to western states is aptly nicknamed the Sagebrush Rebellion. Sagebrush has even become part of our language; rural western families are said to live "out in the sagebrush"—whether sagebrush grows there or not. A few of those families, descendants of the pioneers, still occasionally sip bitter sagebrush teas as digestive tonics.

SAGEBRUSH'S own image seems to have improved remarkably in recent decades. It has been honored as the state flower of Nevada, and two species are marketed commercially by nurserymen as ornamentals. Even in men's boutiques, sagebrush, admittedly out of place, is a popular name for colognes and after-shave lotions.

One of the brightest parts of the sagebrush story may be yet to come. If federal botanists are successful, ranchers may someday stop cursing sagebrush and start planting it. At a Utah experimental station, the U.S. Forest Service is working to cross two varieties of big sagebrush. One is a common, hardy, high-protein variety, the other a rare variety actually palatable to cattle. Development of a nutritious, "tasty" sagebrush could be an enormous economic boost to western cattle ranching. With its evergreen winter leaves accessible even above deep snows, the new variety of sagebrush could become a major source of natural fodder for cattle in late winter and early spring, the times when feed and hay costs are highest.

For a shrub that has been thoroughly cursed since America headed west, sagebrush has done well for itself. Not only has it won the war against its own eradication, it actually has some ranchers beginning to smile. And as a symbol of the West, it ranks right at the top with the buffalo and the longhorn. To be sure, sagebrush "isn't green and it isn't grass," but it is a part of the West that will still be here long after we are gone.

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The Great Wind Wagon Folly

By PEGGY STEPHENSON

The year was 1853 and a group of men had gathered at Westport Landing on the Kansas-Missouri border. For some time the men stood silently studying the strange wagon with the big white canvas lying limp near its front. Then they turned their attention to the suntanned man who had been grappling with the canvas.

"Wind Wagon Thomas," they had dubbed the ex-sailor shortly after his arrival in Westport. Ever since he had been in town, he had bragged how he could take a wagon and change it a bit until it would sail over the prairie, powered by nothing more than the wind. And then that very morning he had let the word get around town that he was ready to prove to everyone that his wagon could take him over the Kansas prairie all the way to Council Grove and back, a distance of 300 miles.

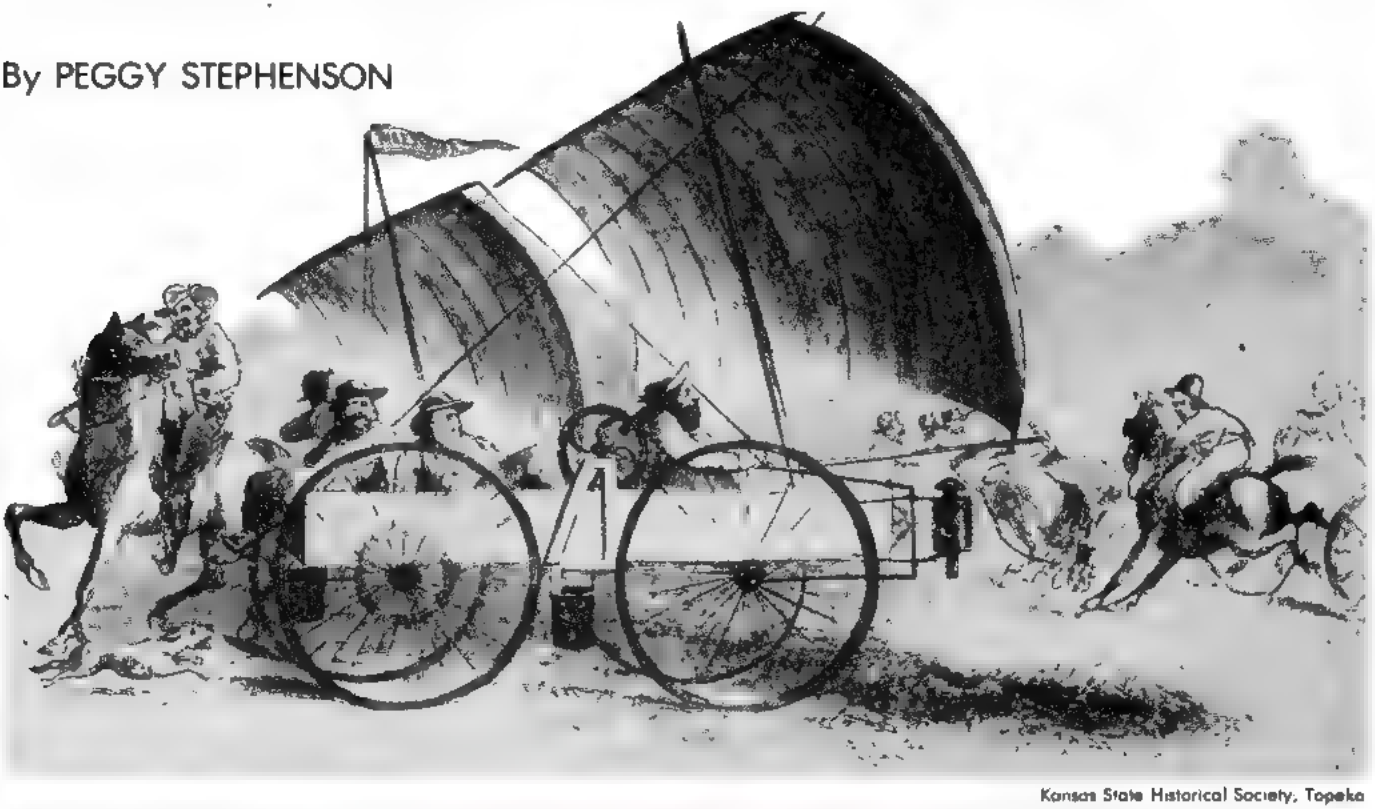
Could anyone actually make a wagon skim across the prairie without horses or animal power of any kind? The men doubted it, but they wanted to be on hand just in case Thomas proved them wrong. Certainly, the confident way he was hoisting the canvas skyward over the center of the front axle made them think he had some idea of what he was doing. Still, he had not made the thing go yet. They would keep waiting and watching.

Suddenly Thomas reached out and gave his wrist a quick flip. The canvas turned and caught the breeze. The crowd gasped and stared in disbelief. It couldn't be, but it was. The wagon was moving fast, taking off across the prairie. Spellbound, the men watched until the strange craft and its transplanted Yankee sailor disappeared completely from sight over the western horizon.

That, the Westportians thought, was probably the last they would see of Brother William Thomas or his wind wagon unless, of course, he had made it only to the first rise and would come limping back afoot shortly. They waited but neither Thomas nor his wagon reappeared. No doubt, they decided, he was too ashamed to return to face their laughter, so home they went to their wives and children.

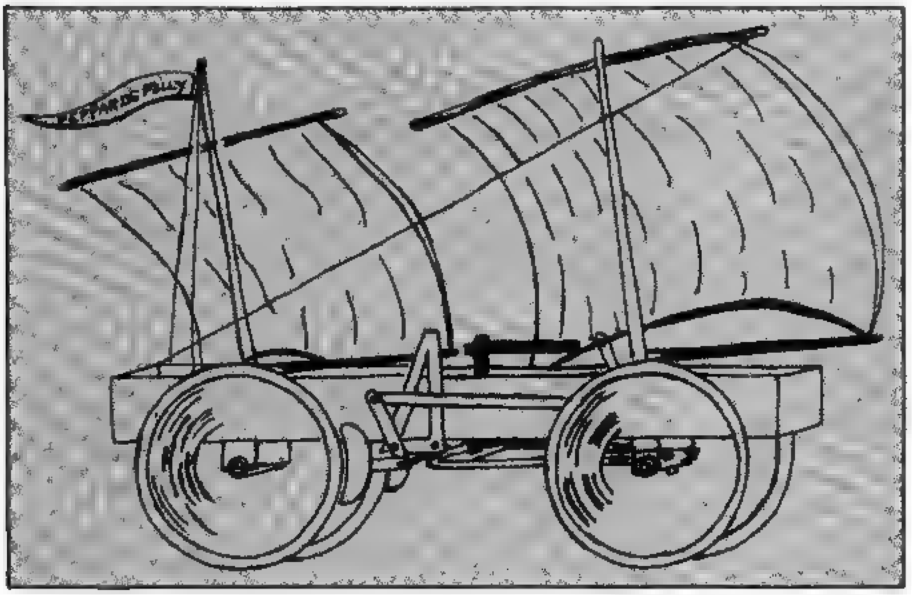
Imagine the surprise of these same men nine days later when, once more congregated at Westport, they were told that a wagon with a big white sail had appeared on the horizon. Trying to appear only mildly curious they decided to check it out.

Yes, they had to admit that the wagon in question belonged to Thomas, all right. Anyone could see that and Thomas, himself, was still on board, smiling more broadly than he had before. His smile grew even larger as he reached into a pocket, pulled out a piece of paper and handed it to one of the men. The man shook his head as his eyes scanned the paper. Right off he could see it was useless to argue. The words on the paper had been penned by the



Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka

Leslie's Illustrated Magazine of July 7, 1860, poked fun at Midwesterners with its depiction of a Kansas wind wagon.



Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka

A sketch of "Peppard's Folly," the big wagon that Sam Peppard and his crew attempted unsuccessfully to steer across Kansas to the Colorado goldfields.

All seemed to be going well until the wind caught the sail full force and, despite the now frantic Thomas's efforts, the wagon made a sudden change to reverse. Something had locked the steering gear and, despite a few well-chosen expletives from the skipper, the ship developed a mind of its own.

highly respected blacksmith of Council Grove, and the gist of those words was that, sure enough, Thomas had arrived there in his "sailing wagon."

Small wonder then that when Thomas tried to convince a few of the more enterprising Westportians that they had best invest in the formation of a company to navigate the prairies via sail, they agreed. Still skeptical, perhaps, but surely not wanting to be left out of any money-making scheme, the community leaders dug deep into their pockets and financed the building of a super wind wagon.

Optimistically called the Overland Navigation Company, the company included a leading physician, Dr. J.W. Parker; the local Indian agent, Benjamin Newson; a young student of the law, J.J. Mastin; and Thomas M. Adams, who had nothing going for him so far as can be ascertained, except visions of an improved personal financial condition. The last member of the group, though certainly not the least, was one Henry Sager, who constructed the wind wagon under Thomas's direction.

The completed wagon looked somewhat like a Conestoga prairie schooner. Twenty-five feet long and seven feet in beam, it rode on huge wheels, each twelve feet in diameter with barrel-sized hubs. Its wagon box reached to the top of the wheels, giving it an interior six feet high with a deck above. Rigged like a catboat with the mast stepped well forward, it carried only a mainsail. Mast and sail rose twenty feet above the deck, and the vehicle was built to move backwards. Thus, the tailgate of the wagon served as the prow and the wagon's tongue was brought over the stern where it could be used as a helm.

The day Thomas demonstrated his wind wagon was one of the most memorable in the annals of Westport. No doubt fortified with a number of generous libations from a local tavern, Thomas took his place at the helm. Aboard with him were the directors, all except Dr. Parker, who had seen plenty of broken bones in his day and deemed it wise to follow earthbound on his trusty saddle mule.

For a time all went well. The ship's sail caught and held the wind and the wagon went scooting smoothly over hills and gullies and prairie grasses. Faster and faster the craft sped, quite properly impressing its occupants and all the witnesses to the occasion.

So impressed with the success of his wind wagon was the adventuresome Thomas that he decided to try a trick or two. Going with the wind had been exhilirating but was becoming boring. Why not put the helm over and run straight into the wind? This maneuver might possibly catch the sail so that the vessel would go even faster. It was worth a try. With an eager smile and complete trust in his superior expertise, Thomas moved the helm over and waited.

At first the craft came around grandly. All seemed to be going very well until suddenly the wind caught the sail full force and, despite the now frantic Thomas's efforts, the wagon made a sudden change to reverse. Something had locked the steering gear and, despite a few well-chosen expletives from the skipper, the ship developed a mind of its own and began sailing around and around in an ever-widening circle.

The passengers, who only a short time before had been laughing and joking at their good fortune for having had the foresight to invest in such a splendid and promising venture, were now hanging on for dear life. If they could have deserted the ship they would have, but one look over the side at the space between them and the hard earth and they decided to stay on board. Only after the wind suddenly died and the craft slowed considerably did the directors scramble to the ground. There each uttered a prayer of thanksgiving for having escaped with no more than bruises and a possible broken bone or two.

YES, THE passengers deserted. But as he should have, the captain stayed with his craft, cursing and pulling at the helm until his hands were blistered. At last he was able to lodge the thing against a stake-and-rider fence and, jumping down, ran after his investors, swearing that the wind wagon's behavior on that occasion was unusual and that he would study the problem and see to it that it never happened again. Couldn't the far-sighted investors see? The wind wagon was a surefire money-maker. There was no doubt about it. All of them would be sorry until their dying day if they withdrew their support.

Nothing Thomas could say shook the weary investors' determination to have nothing more to do with any Yankee schemes. So what if the slow, ox-drawn wagons were susceptible to breakdowns, bad weather, and hostile Indians? The wind wagons were worse.

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What happened to Thomas? No one can say for certain. All that is known about him is that after the dissolution of the Overland Navigating Company he made several attempts to perfect his wind wagon. He evidently became disillusioned and at last boarded his vessel and sailed off into the sunset, never to be seen again by the citizenry of Westport.

Shortly after Thomas tried to harness the wind, the proprietor of the Oskaloosa Steam Saw Mill, one Sam Peppard, decided to try his hand at a similar venture. Thus it was that in 1860 Peppard and a fellow Kansan, John Hinton, constructed a wind wagon and set sail for Colorado to join others seeking the bright promise of gold.

It must be admitted that Peppard's tryst with the wind was somewhat more successful than Thomas's. Still, even it could hardly be classed as a howling success. Peppard and Hinton were three weeks on the route; of those twenty-one days, only nine were favorable for wind travel. Though Peppard and his crew did reach Colorado, they failed to make it all the way to Denver.

What did the folks back home in Jefferson County think of Peppard's wind wagon? "Peppard's Folly" they called it, even though they had to concede that the strange craft had made it to Colorado. According to Andreas, an early-day Kansas historian, Peppard's trip to Colorado was the only instance on record of successful navigation on dry land with a sail. Evidently Andreas had never heard of Wind Wagon Thomas and his Council Grove success.

As the years went by and other hardy souls tried their hand at harnessing the prairie wind, a tall tale took form. Strange as it may seem, the tale was based not on a "Thomas" or a "Peppard" but on a "Smith." Smith, folks claimed, could sail his wagon with ease over the prairie. He, too, began his daring feats in Westport. There the natives stood staunchly back of the belief that Smith, like Thomas, had been a seafaring man. They could tell, they said, because of the way he was always squinting. "Comes from always looking at the horizon," they'd declare. His ship? A Conestoga wagon, they claimed it was, sway-backed with a horseshoe canvas top. Yes, and it had a pole sticking up out of the wagon and on the pole was a huge square of canvas turned a little sideways to catch the wind.

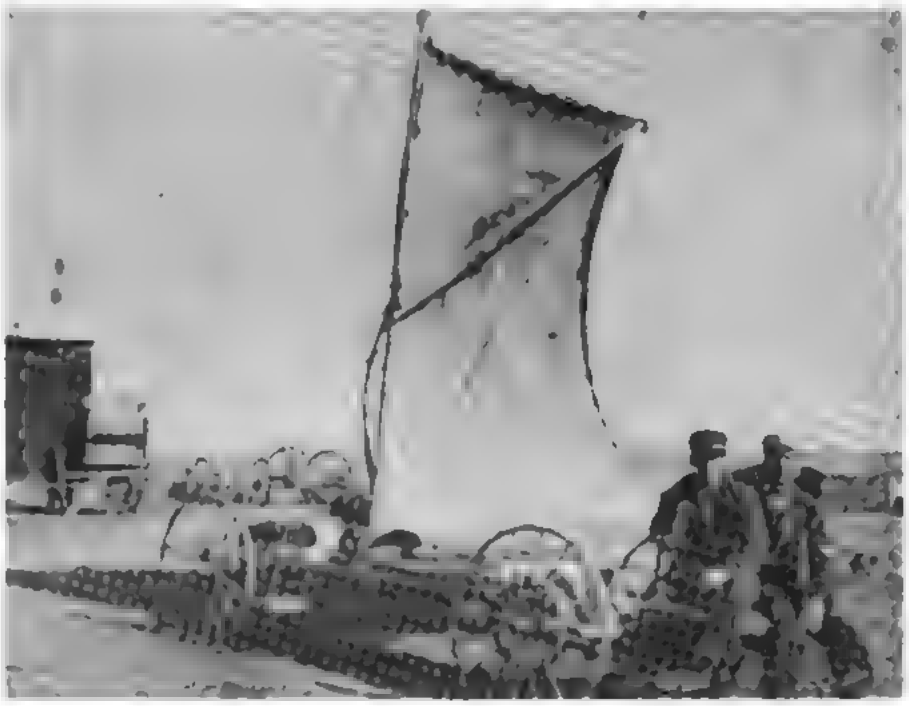
According to the legend, Smith, like Thomas, convinced certain town leaders that wind wagon travel was the up-and-coming thing and they would be wise to invest in it. He had a way about him that led the town leaders to put their trust in him, and soon he had them aloft, skimming across the prairie. But his luck, like Thomas's, played out on him. When there was wind, he could not control it. And when there was none he couldn't go anywhere. It was soon evident to all concerned that there was little to be gained from putting money into wind wagon travel.

However, though the fame of William Thomas and his wind wagon activities faded into oblivion as the years went by, Smith's grew ever brighter. For, though Smith's wind wagon, like Thomas's, was never seen after it left Westport, the stories remained and grew.

Cowpokes making their way across the prairie often told how their critters would suddenly rear up at a strange looking dust cloud—one that if you studied it for a spell you might see something that looked like a wagon with a sail at the center of its vortex. No doubt about it. It had to be Wind Wagon Smith out navigating the prairies again, just as he used to do in the old days.

Also, somewhere north of the Santa Fe Trail on the Arkansas River a camp of Arapahoe swore they had seen the ghostly figure of a white man at the helm of a strange wagon moving silently across the prairie. It seemed to have nothing going for it but a big sail filled with the wind. When the strange craft came close enough, they could see that the man on board was smiling. There was an odd look on his face and a curious twinkle in his eyes that made the Arapahoe think he could visualize something they could not.

Who was that man and what was it that he could see? Could he possibly have been Wind Wagon Smith envisioning the elevated place in the heritage of Kansas folklore that someday would be his? If so, he should have given credit where credit was due—to William Thomas and Sam Peppard and the many other honest-to-goodness wind wagoners who had done their dead-level best to tame the ornery Kansas wind.



Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka

George Bull and Clint McIntosh of Logan County, Kansas, rigged up a wind wagon they claimed was handy for rolling about their farm when the wind behaved itself.

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Asa Mercer: Washington

By CHERYL LANDES

Unlike today, the nineteenth century was a time when most men did not change careers. They chose an occupation to support their families and stayed with it for life. A few, however, tried a variety of jobs, moving from one town to another and enjoying some brief moments of success.

One of those men, Asa Mercer, switched careers as if he were a cat with nine lives. In his seventy-eight-year life span, he wore the hats of carpenter, university president, legislator, businessman, publisher, editor, and writer. He even managed to get involved in Wyoming's Johnson County War, probably one of the nastiest range wars in U.S. history. But the most ambitious of his brief pursuits—and probably the most unusual—consisted of recruiting single women from the East Coast to wed the lonely male inhabitants of fledgling Washington Territory.

University of Washington Library, Northwest Collection, Seattle

Asa Mercer.

In the 1860s, few women lived in the Pacific Northwest; in the Seattle area, men outnumbered them nine to one. Mercer first became aware of this slight imbalance as a newcomer to the region from Ohio in 1861, fresh out of Franklin College.

While working as a carpenter at the newly chartered territorial university (now the University of Washington), Mercer gained a quick promotion to president. At that time, the curriculum included grammar, math, and spelling, but there were no students. Mercer met that challenge head-on, scouring the countryside and logging camps, recruiting students with the zeal of a big time, modern college football coach. The settlers were interested but unwilling to leave their only sources of income. Mercer solved that dilemma by arranging Saturday work, logging all day at $1.50 a cord, and accumulated fifteen to twenty students for his first class.

While Mercer possessed a flair for promotion, he didn't realize his students would not be the only ones receiving an education. He had much to learn himself about life in the Northwest. As the first few terms at the university flew by, he discovered that obtaining a higher education was not the highest of his student body's priorities. They sought female companionship. Desperate to keep enrollment up, the quick-thinking Mercer decided to try an extremely ambitious idea; he would go East and return with single women ready for married life. Mercer sailed for Massachusetts in late 1863 and found eleven New England ladies with the pioneering spirit. Nine of the women made the Northwest their permanent home; one died and another returned to the East. The settlers were so grateful to Mercer that they elected him to the territorial legislature in 1864.

Mercer attempted to expand his East

Territory's Matchmaker

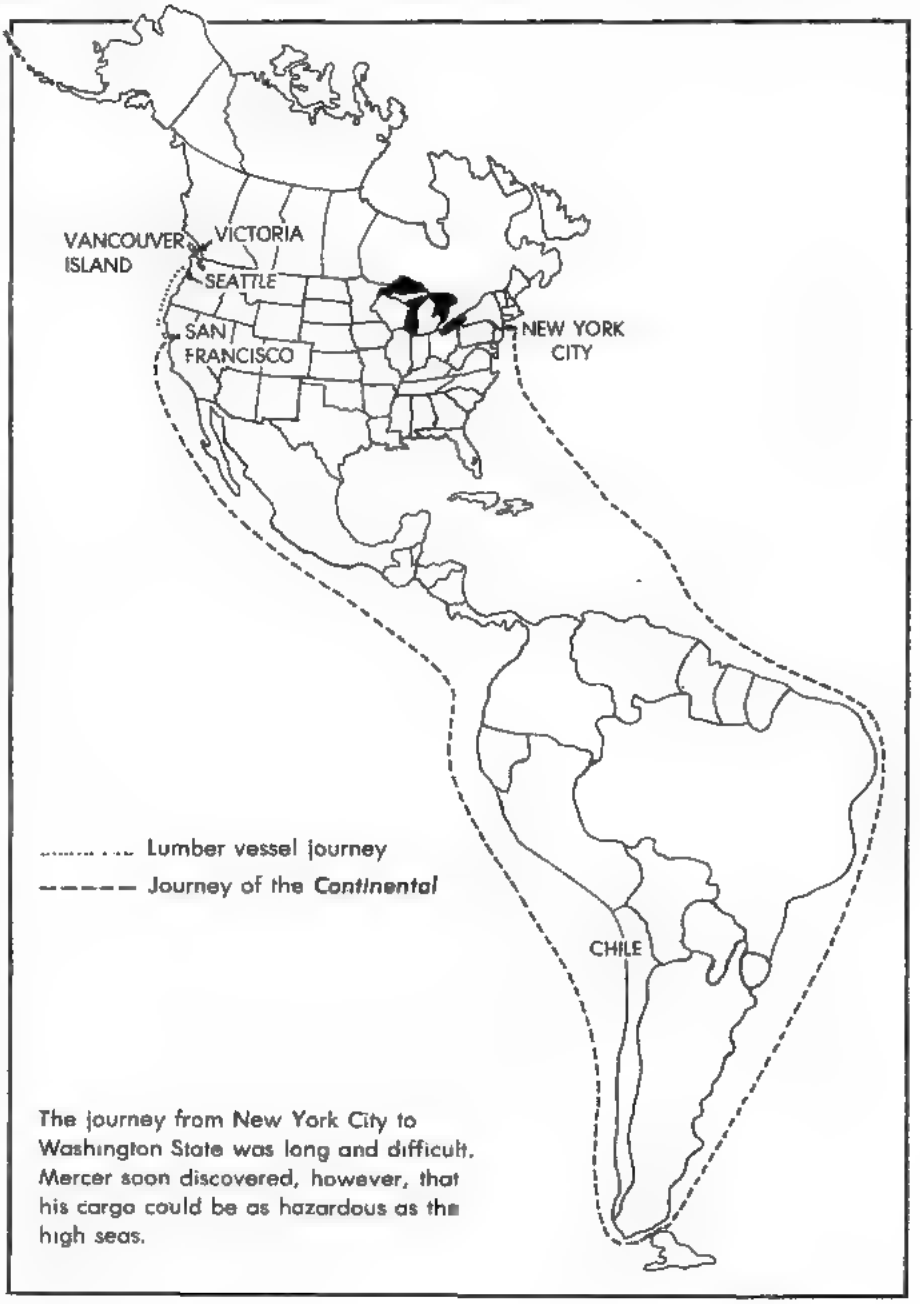
Coast recruitment. On his next trip, he planned to return with several hundred women. To enhance his efforts, Mercer wrote a pamphlet presenting Washington as a disease-free utopia. He neglected to mention the cold, rainy winters characteristic of the Northwest—which some dislike more than snow—and only slightly hinted at his ulterior motive.

He wrote, "The beauties of the climate, the vast extent of grazing lands—seven million acres of agricultural land of the finest quality—fish in a thousand bays and banks; big trees; piles and spars on hillside and plain; coal in measureless quantities beneath the hills; broad and magnificent rivers; manufacturing resources on every hand; an inland sea, and bays whitened by the sails of every nation; not one of these alone, but all announce the future of the north-west division of the United States of America. . . . The fascinating beauty of the mountain scenery, the wild magnificence of the tumbling cataracts, and lakes of placid beauty, add much to the bulk of attraction.

"Over twenty thousand farms lie within our borders, upon which families can locate, and by efficient effort make the 'wilderness blossom as the rose.' The citizens of the Territory are generally an intelligent people, and all that is lacking to make comfort dwell in the shadow of each household, is an increase of population, and especially the introduction of female society in greater abundance."

Mercer sought financial aid from the Washington legislature. They gave him plenty of moral support but not a single penny. The desperate male settlers, however, were willing to help as much as possible—even when it meant forking over as much as $300 apiece to cover Mercer's expenses. Many others entrusted him with hard-earned savings to purchase agricultural equipment and other supplies.

Unfortunately, the pioneers' contributions could not completely finance such a massive endeavor, so Mercer decided to go to Washington, D.C., and look up his "old friend," President Abraham Lincoln. As a child in the Midwest, Mercer had sat upon Abe's lap. But he arrived on the East Coast in 1865 only to learn of Lincoln's assassination. Saddened but still carrying high hopes, Mercer proceeded to badger every government official he could corner, from President Andrew Johnson on down. All were sympathetic, but otherwise uncooperative.



The journey from New York City to Washington State was long and difficult. Mercer soon discovered, however, that his cargo could be as hazardous as the high seas.

Finally, he found a friend in Gen. U.S. Grant, who, after four years on the war front, understood male loneliness. Grant signed for the use of an old Civil War ship to transport the women back to the Northwest. The quartermaster, however, refused to issue the vessel. Instead, he offered a deal. He would sell Mercer the *Continental* for $80,000, one-third of its worth but well beyond Mercer's means.

Soon a shrewd businessman caught wind of Mercer's plight and stepped for-

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ward with his own deal; he bought the ship and offered cut-rate fares. There was only one catch: if fewer than 200 passengers signed on, full fare would be charged. Mercer, much relieved, readily agreed and headed off to New York to fill his roster.

The streets of New York met his enterprise with mixed reviews, and the financial delay in securing transportation was a great disadvantage. The *Tribune* hailed his noble efforts, while the *Herald* claimed the westbound women would become inmates of brothels serving a pack of lecherous louts. As a result, many originally enthusiastic supporters cancelled, leaving Mercer with only forty-six eligible maidens or Civil War widows. Others who planned to go despite the media's criticisms, cancelled when they could not afford the fee for their passage (fifty dollars down, twenty-five dollars upon arrival in Seattle).

For those who did board the ship, the trip to Seattle was far from peaceful. On the second day of the voyage, one of the women lost her false teeth overboard during a bout with seasickness and had to choke down the daily diet of parboiled beans, fried salt pork, and tea steeped in salt water for the next three months. As the ship sailed from New York around the Horn, it was caught in the crossfire of a battle between Spain and Chile. A crewmember drowned after he was helped overboard by another crewmember. And one woman, feeling an arm go around her waist as she sat knitting, plunged a needle halfway into the offending limb.

Mercer discovered quickly that his so-called "fragile" cargo really consisted of extremely strong-willed, independent individuals, and he faced difficulties in preventing them from flirting with the ship's crew, especially the officers. Roger Conant, a reporter for the New York *Times*, sailed west with the group and observed one of Mercer's attempts to distract them. According to Conant's journals, Mercer invented games to keep the women occupied for hours. One was guessing proverbs, or 'spiritual rappings,' from the Bible. Another was called—appropriately enough—the Continental Game. "He would take a pack of cards, and writing a subject upon them, would distribute them face down to those engaged in the play," wrote Conant. "The first in order reverses the card, rises and immediately proceeds to speak for five minutes on the subject which fate has assigned him. The play took amazingly certain [sic] with certain old Maiden Members of the party, but the young and gay couldn't see the joke, and flirted with the officers harder than ever."

Downtown Seattle, Washington, circa 1860–1870s (A. Curtis photo). University of Washington Library, Northwest Collection, Seattle

By the time the *Continental* reached San Francisco on April 25, 1866, five of the passengers were already betrothed, one to Mercer. Five others kept circling around an eligible California miner and became known as the Constellation.

Arriving in San Francisco with three dollars in his pocket, Mercer cabled Washington's Governor Pickering for help. All he received was a seven and one-half dollar cable, collect, offering regrets. To finish the trip, Mercer sold the agricultural equipment.

Mercer's problems were not over. More rumors from San Franciscans about the weather and the undesirable personalities of the Northwest settlers prevented about half of Mercer's cargo from continuing the trip. The rest found themselves drifting on lumber boats for the last leg of their journey.

By the time they reached Seattle, Mercer's greatly magnified money problems turned out to be the least of his worries. A horde of female-starved backwoodsmen had somehow concluded they were entitled to claim the women like baggage, then march uptown to the justice of the peace. They descended upon the lumber vessel like vultures. But Mercer, unintimidated, stood his ground. Love in Seattle, he proclaimed, would be earned.

NEEDLESS to say, Washingtonians greeted Mercer with considerably less enthusiasm on his second return from New York. Most, however, understood—although they may not have forgiven—after Mercer gave several required public explanations, one of which was published in the *Puget Sound Weekly* newspaper.

Yet even if Mercer had given in to the settlers' demands, the women passengers would have intervened. They wanted to choose their own husbands, and they expressed their intentions firmly. According to Conant's journal, they openly refused to marry anyone who contracted with Mercer and "wouldn't even speak to them."

Some of the women wed quickly; many others spent more time looking. According to the periodical *Social Verses*, all but "two or three" of them were attached by 1869.

Conant wrote that one old woodsman met the widow "W" (presumably one Sarah Wakeman) at 3:00 p.m., offered his hand at 6:00 p.m., and was accepted at 9:00 p.m.

Forty-year-old Mary Martin married a twenty-five-year-old oiler who worked on the *Continental*. A Mrs. Horton, age seventy, also found a mate shortly after she arrived. Ida May Barlow Pinkham, a twenty-year-old linguist, married the man who carried her bags from the lumber vessel to the hotel. They had fourteen children.

Ann Conner, age forty, married Mark Hattsuck after teaching for three years in Olympia. In a letter home, she complained about the food, lack of privacy, rough seas, and brazen flirting on the journey west, but added, "I did not regret my moving and try to support myself."

One of the ladies married exceptionally well. Elizabeth Peebles came west with her sister, Anna, strictly to see the country. They did not intend to stay and did not consider themselves among the fruits of Mercer's promotional efforts. Elizabeth taught school in Olympia and was the first woman clerk of the legislature before marrying Angus MacKintosh in 1871. Angus was said to be worth $100,000 by some sources. The couple's son, Kenneth, became a judge. Anna became deputy collector of internal revenue in Olympia before she wed Amos Brown in 1867. Her salary was seventy-five dollars per month.

The unwelcome circumstances surrounding Mercer's return to Seattle sent a strong message—it was time for him to move on. So he headed to Oregon in 1866, where he continued working to foster trade with the East and to encourage immigration. The governor soon appointed him commissioner for immigration. Mercer continued his promotional pursuits by writing pamphlets lauding his new state. He also began a foray into journalism by establishing *The Oregon Grange* newspaper.

Eight years later, the urge to wander hit Mercer again. He moved to Texas, where he ran four different newspapers during the next decade. While there, he also became an expert on the cattle industry. In fact, so astute had he become on the subject that in 1886 the state of California commissioned him to study and analyze its growing cattle business. By that time, however, Mercer had moved again to Cheyenne, Wyoming.

With his involvement in the Johnson County War, Mercer again wore out his welcome. This time he did not leave the state but instead confined himself to a 900-acre farm. While details on the rest of his life are sketchy, it appears that time eventually healed most wounds. By 1906, he was again writing pamphlets boosting Wyoming, and he began working as a tour guide at Yellowstone Park.

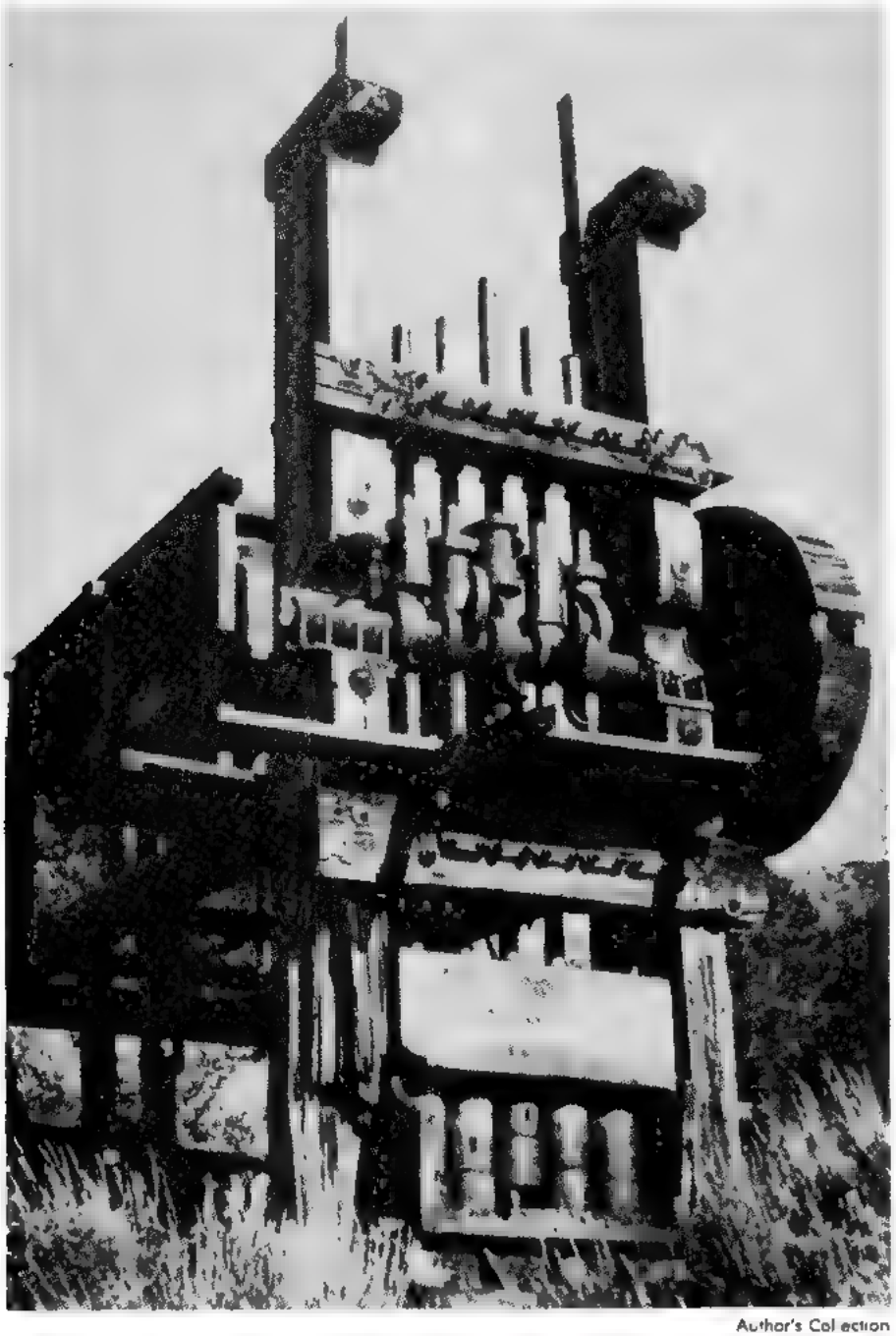
MERCER DIED in 1917 at the age of seventy-eight. Although he had worked at nearly two dozen occupations during his lifetime, he never tried to write an autobiography, which is why he probably remains today an energetic and engaging, yet highly elusive figure in the development of the West.

Today, feelings in Seattle have mellowed toward the well-intentioned man who tried to recruit brides to the Pacific Northwest over a century ago. A major traffic artery in downtown Seattle bears Mercer's name. So does an island nearby in Lake Washington. Mercer Island is aptly named; its shape, a footprint, is a symbolic reminder of the matchmaker who was not afraid to take the first step to aid the region's growth.

Muted Mills of Como

By PAUL TAYLOR

Photos Courtesy of the Author



Author's Collection

Mills that once stamped out Nevada's wealth today stand like silent sentinels near the decaying community of Como

The deserted mining town of Como, Nevada, lies decaying high in the wild Pine Nut Mountains, eleven miles southeast of Dayton and about eighteen miles due east of Carson City.

The years immediately following the discovery of the mother lode at Virginia City were eventful ones for Nevada. As miners deserted California and headed for the Comstock, they found every square foot of land staked and claimed. They journeyed outward from there into other mountain ranges and, finding other outcroppings of rich ore, they established new towns, counties, and mining districts.

Como was established in 1863 during the gold excitement in Palmyra District and was the first county seat of Lyon County, at one time boasting a population of 700.

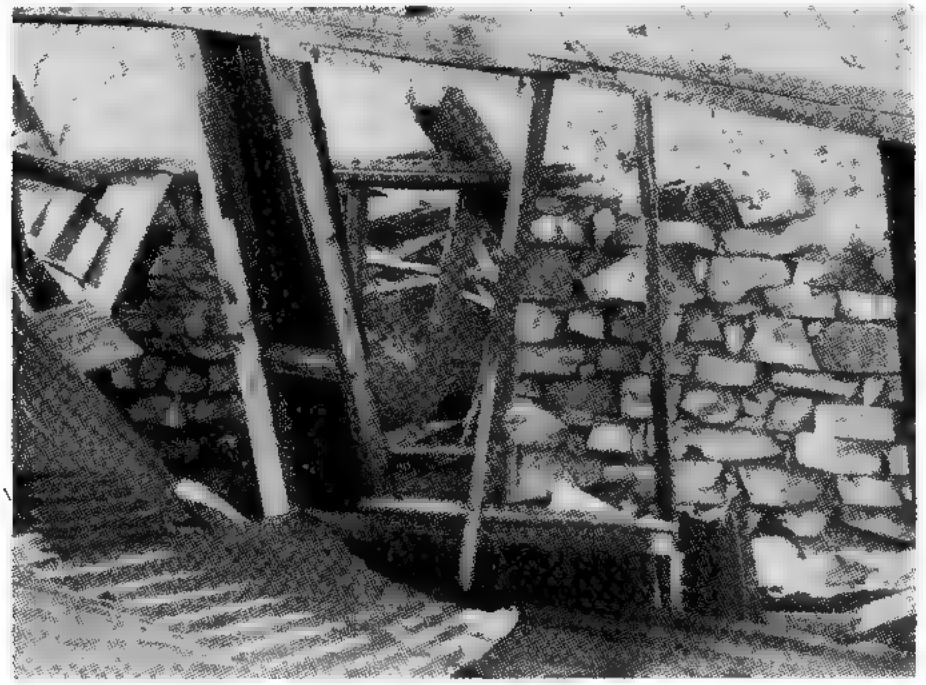
The Pine Nut range is a thirty-five-mile spine, covered with pinyon pines and rising to an elevation of over 9,000 feet. The mountains are bordered on all sides by fertile, irrigated lands—Carson, Mason, and Smith valleys, and the Carson River bottomlands between Dayton and Fort Churchill. Yet they remain nearly as lonely and isolated today as they were before the advent of the white man—perhaps more so, for Indians once lived in the Pine Nuts, but they, too, are gone.

Como, consisting of stone ruins, tumbledown shacks, bleached tailing piles, remains of old mills, and massive headframes standing gaunt against the desert sky, lies in a high, wind-whipped desert pass between 8,543-foot Rawe Peak and 8,763-foot Lyon Peak. In addition to abandoned mines and ghost ruins of the old town, the region also contains Indian caves and petroglyphs.

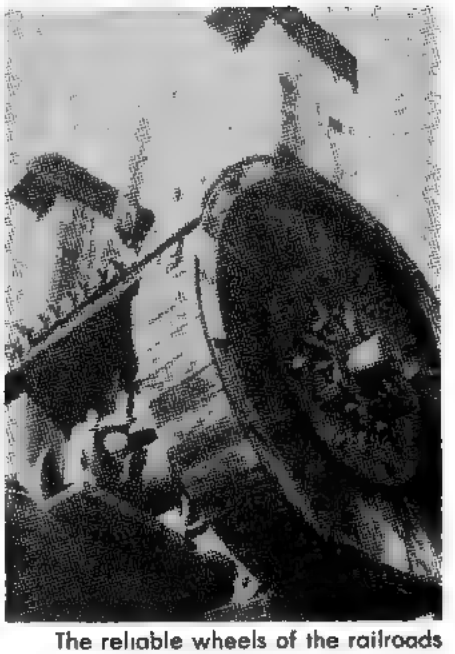
Como gained a measure of fame in 1864 when its citizens cast 200 votes for Lincoln and no votes for McClellan. To tally the 200th vote, legend tells us that a sick miner was taken from his bed and carried to the polling place. It was said the man died before he had a chance to mark his ballot, but others swore he lived long enough to vote and died immediately after casting his ballot for Lincoln.

Como's first mill, a steam-driven contraption called "The Solomon Davis," had served for a number of years on the Mother Lode in California and then on the Carson River at Dayton. It arrived at Como on huge freight wagons and was escorted by a parade which included a band composed of fife, drum, cymbals, and cornet. The mill failed to function profitably, however,

Both Author's Collection



What may have been Como's courthouse returns to the earth.



The reliable wheels of the railroads and stamp mills have been replaced by the fickle ones of Nevada's casinos.

and in 1865 was packed up and hauled back down the mountain.

Como's first newspaper was the *Sentinel*, referred to as a lively, hopeful sheet, with no doubt whatever of the ultimate success of everything connected to Como. The paper was started by T.W. Abraham in March 1864, and his arrival, too, was met by a brass band in full force, playing "Yankee Doodle" and "Hail, Columbia."

Como's first mill, a steam-driven contraption called "The Solomon Davis," had served for a number of years on the Mother Lode in California and then on the Carson River at Dayton. It arrived at Como on huge freight wagons and was escorted by a parade which included a band composed of fife, drum, cymbals, and cornet.

Inhabitants swore the region was so healthy a man would have to move away to die, and indeed, the first death there, in 1863, was labeled a suicide. Citizens decided the remarkable event merited appropriate ceremony, and they dealt with it accordingly. Sawed lumber was nonexistent on the mountain, but the miners located an old wagon bed that had been used as a pigpen, stained it with oxblood, polished it to a high gloss, and accorded the deceased a first-class funeral.

One day in 1864, Paiute Chief Numaga asked mine owners to stop cutting the pinyon pines from which his people harvested nuts, an essential food supply. The companies ignored the plea. That same day several more than the usual number of Indians appeared and an alarm was sent to Fort Churchill. The miners feared an Indian attack and the camp was placed under military command.

During the night, as the story goes, two miners approached along the road from Dayton and were fired upon by edgy residents and soldiers. Barrage after barrage was fired, bullets whizzing and ricocheting down the canyon toward the two miners.

By dawn, troopers and miners had fired nearly all their ammunition and came out to count dead Indians. At that moment Chief Numaga sauntered into camp to learn what all the shooting was about, much to the chagrin of all concerned.

Something less than $1,000,000 in gold and silver was taken from Como, and in a few years the town began to dwindle away. The county seat was moved to Dayton, along with the newspaper after only thirteen issues. The paper became the *Lyon County Sentinel*, then ceased publication altogether when the seat of government was moved from Dayton to Yerington a few years later.

The town's last inhabitant, sixty-three-year-old Judge G.W. Walton, died in a fire that destroyed his cabin on the night of November 22, 1874.

Perhaps the most famous resident of the Como region was Chief Truckee, father of Chief Winnemucca, befriender of white men, purported savior of immigrant wagon trains and scout for Kit Carson and John C. Frémont. Today, a river and a town bear his name.

In his declining years, Chief Truckee, given the rank of captain for his volunteer services to Frémont's troops during the Mexican War, became ill from a tarantula bite on his face. He died October 8, 1860, in a wickiup somewhere near the site of Como and was buried with a wooden marker, the captain's commission given him by Frémont placed on his breast. The marker is gone, and Truckee's resting place is lost in time.

The road from Dayton is steep and rocky, but another road from Wellington, thirty miles to the south, is graded and, except for winter erosion, is usually in good condition.

When the Earth Trembled

By ROBERT M. HYATT

Illustrated by AL MARTIN NAPOLETANO

If the cataclysm that rocked the midsection of the United States on December 11, 1811, occurred today, it would utterly destroy every building in Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky, and probably lay waste all the surrounding states. On that date one of the most violent and devastating earthquakes in the era of man shook much of America. It was of a severity matching any ever recorded and of a duration never experienced before. Spin-off tremors jolted places as far away as Washington, Charleston, and New Orleans.

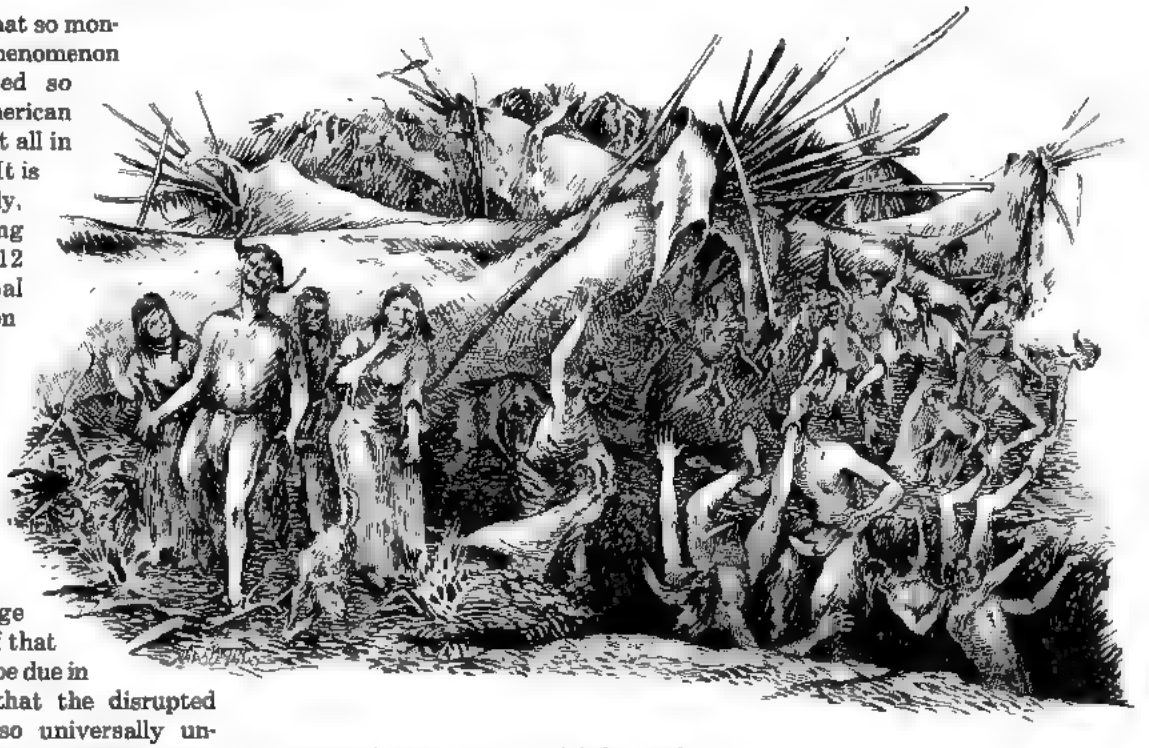
Of the forty-nine major quakes occurring between the years 526 and 1960 listed in the *New York World Telegram Almanac*, the so-called New Madrid Earthquake (its epicenter is believed to have been just south of the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers near the settlement of New Madrid, Missouri) is the only one that does not show an estimated death count. All the others do. The omission of an estimate is because the affected area was then wild, almost unknown wilderness with comparatively few inhabitants other than a scattering of daring pioneers and various Indian tribes. Today it is home to some fifteen million people.

The initial convulsion was followed by a series of tremendous quakes on December 16 and 17 and by two of even greater intensity on January 23 and February 7, 1812. They began to taper off then, except for minor tremors which shook a vast region for the next seven years. It may be only a coincidence that in 1812 a sequence of exceptionally violent quakes destroyed many Franciscan missions in California.

The terror of the area's inhabitants cannot be imagined. The Indians must have suffered many casualties from falling trees and by toppling into the enormous crevasses that opened everywhere in the earth. British traders far up the Missouri counseled their Indian allies to hold the Americans responsible for the earth's shaking. It was sound strategy; the War of 1812 was brewing.

The comparatively few whites who lived in the stricken area did not have to risk brick and stone buildings collapsing upon their heads. They lived in log and sod dwellings which are not easily disrupted by earth tremors.

A glaring fact stands out in this



catastrophe. It is that so monstrous a general phenomenon should have gained so little notice in American history, and none at all in American folklore. It is a strange anomaly, since the continuing shakes through 1812 were the principal topic of conversation throughout the country. The fast approaching struggle with England received less coverage in the newspapers of that hectic time.

The failure of historians to enlarge upon the subject of that vast upheaval may be due in part to the fact that the disrupted region was then so universally unknown. The American Revolution was barely three decades in the past. The first stirrings of freedom still resounded in praise from pulpit and public square. The great westward trek had barely begun. Only a few brave souls had the temerity to plunge with their families and goods into the Great Unknown beyond the mountains.

STILL, WHILE historians were remiss, random references to the mighty quake exist. James Audubon and John Bradley, both of whom were in the area at the time, wrote at length of their personal experiences. Congress took testimony from survivors as a prelude to appropriating financial relief for the victims. It is not known how many survivors came forward to claim assistance; they must have been few.

All this was grist for the newspapers of the time. Yet the fanfare did not compare to that following the April 18, 1906, quake that destroyed San Francisco. While most of the city suffered huge fire losses (most buildings were of wood), the *World Almanac* lists only 452 human fatalities. That quake, certainly a major one, was hardly a tremble compared to the New Madrid Earthquake.

If there were few man-made structures in the area of the 1811–12 quake, there was a plethora of Nature's perishables. Millions of giant trees were uprooted and shorn into splinters; streams changed course. Even a stretch of the Mississippi River, because of substrata violence, ran north for several hours, flooding the lowlands. In a few instances the river changed course permanently, leaving vast mud fields and swamps. New islands were born.

The major loss of life was due to destruction of river traffic, which even then was heavy. Uncounted barges, keelboats, and flatboats were on the river, heading toward New Orleans with cargos and families. The mighty turbulence of the water swamped everything afloat, and for hundreds of miles the banks of the Mississippi were littered with sacks of grain and household goods. The boats had been virtually isolated when wrecked. Most of the voyage from the falls of the Ohio to the gulf was through country inhabited only by Indians. A casualty count was impossible, but it was far higher than on land.

The area of maximum force was roughly a 100-mile circle around New Madrid, even than a considerable settlement. Here the shocks were accompanied by sounds resembling thunder and terrible explosions, according to witnesses. During the worst quakes the earth rose and fell in undulating swells like a tormented sea. Entire forests toppled. At times day became night, and for weeks the sky was veiled by a yellow haze. These manifestations were so terrifying and unexplainable that many believed the end of the world was at hand. A few lost their minds and did away with themselves.

A terrible aspect of the carnage was the earth's being riven by wide, deep fissures that suddenly yawned, and into which fleeing people and animals plunged. Some of the vents were shallow; others seemed bottomless. From those cracks issued sulphurous fumes, upheavals of ashes, blasts of volcanic dust and geysers of hot water and steam. Such phenomena were far beyond the grasp of simple people, reminiscent of frightening scenes in hell as depicted in old books.

As they will sometimes do in times of crisis, wild animals lost their innate fear of man; deer, elk, bear, small rodents, and even snakes sought the companionship of their human enemies. They all huddled together, anticipating the next calamity and hoping for an avenue of escape.

THE TOTAL loss of life during this epic period will never be known, but it could not have been large according to contemporary estimates. Human survival on land was due largely to the flexible nature of the log and sod shacks. Those lost in the raging turmoil of the Mississippi and, perhaps, other rivers and streams is another matter, as is the number who were killed pitching into fissures or by falling trees. Most of the fissures eventually closed, and within a generation the stricken terrain was much as it had been before the quake. The enormous mounds of fallen trees rotted or were burned, and where once total devastation existed there are now cities and towns, farms and highways. It is doubtful if the oldest resident of the area knows anything about the terror that once shook the land.

Graham War Party vs. Tewksburys

—August 10, 1887; Pleasant Valley, Arizona—

By BILL O'NEAL

In 1887 a vicious range war erupted in Arizona's Pleasant Valley between two families, the Grahams and the Tewksburys. Even today Pleasant Valley is difficult to reach, accessible only by two rough, precipitous dirt roads. A century ago Pleasant Valley was even more remote: the nearest settlement was 100 miles away, and in every direction Pleasant Valley, also known as the Tonto Basin, is surrounded by mountains and peaks. The rugged terrain boasts luxuriant grasslands, however, and water is abundantly supplied by Cherry Creek, Tonto Creek, and other bubbling streams. Some of the early settlers were rustlers, and other wanted men gravitated to the wild, isolated Tonto Basin.

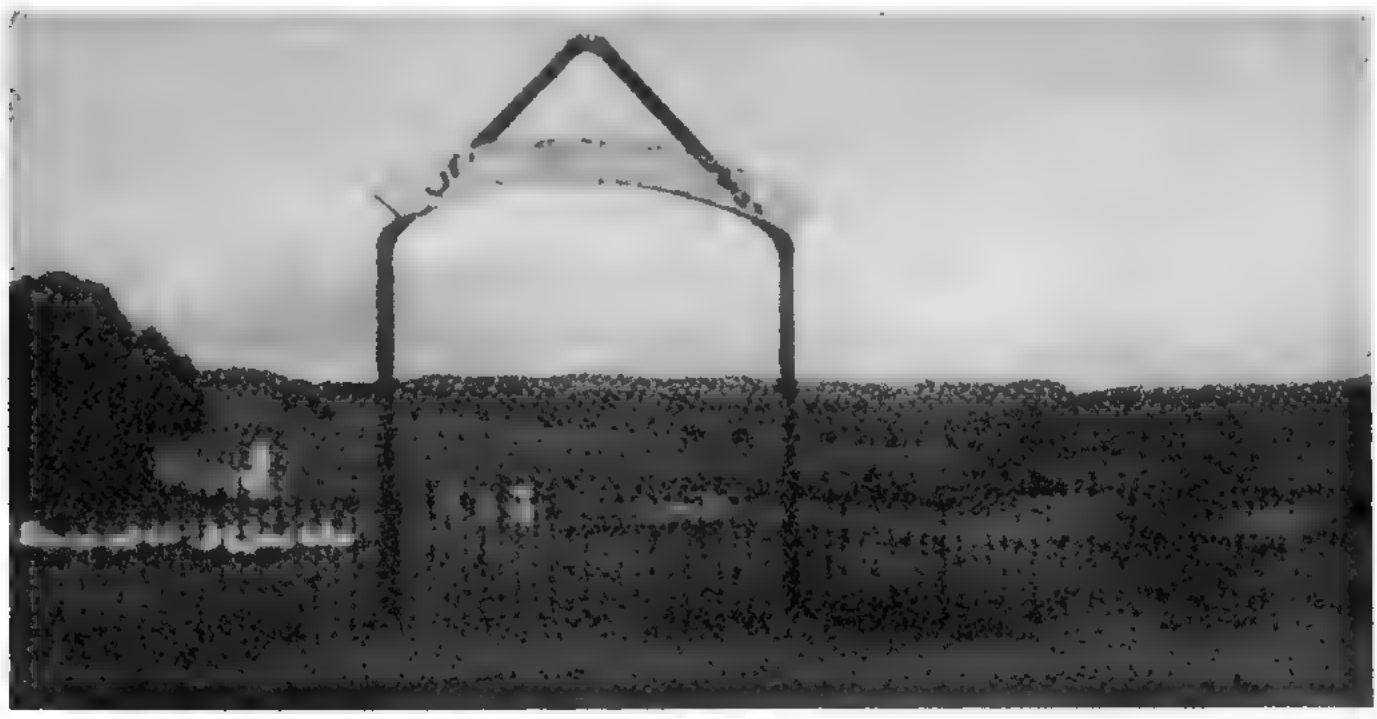
John D. Tewksbury brought his family into the Tonto Basin in 1882. Tewksbury and his three grown sons, John, Jim, and Edwin, built a cabin on Cherry Creek. At about the same time the Graham brothers, Tom and John, established a cattle ranch on the west side of Cherry Creek, some ten miles northwest of the Tewksbury cabin. Harsh feelings grew between the two families. In 1884 the Grahams charged the Tewksburys and three of their associates with rustling. It was rumored that the Grahams were ethnically prejudiced against the half-Indian, half-Irish Tewksburys; other rumors suggested adultery between a Graham brother and one of the Tewksbury's wives.

When the hard-bitten Tewksburys decided to introduce a flock of sheep into what always had been cattle country, hard feelings exploded into violence. In February 1887 the Tewksburys' Basque sheepherder was riddled by gunfire, and the murderers' trail led to the Graham ranch. A few months later rustler Mart Blevins disappeared, presumably waylaid and killed by the Tewksburys.

In early August one of Blevins' sons, Hamp Blevins, rounded up a crew of combative riders to search for his father. Tom Tucker, a big, affable Hash Knife cowboy, joined Blevins, and so did Texan John Paine and five other men who rode for the Hash Knife or the Grahams. At dawn on August 4, after loading up with ammunition and engaging in "medicine talks" all night, the gunmen rode out intending to "start a little war of our own."

A week later, on Wednesday afternoon, August 10, Blevins and his seven companions rode up to a loopholed cabin on Middleton Creek. Jim and Ed Tewksbury occupied the cabin, along with Jim Roberts and other cohorts. Roberts was an expert gunman and a courageous fighting man who had suffered the loss of several horses and who assumed that the Grahams or the Blevinses were responsible.

Blevins and the seven members of his war party approached the sturdy log cabin late in the afternoon. Jim



Author's Photo

The Young Cemetery in the Tonto Basin, where several victims of the Pleasant Valley War are buried.

Tewksbury appeared in the doorway and there was a tense exchange of words. Tucker swung his horse to lead the others away.

Suddenly a volley of gunfire exploded from the cabin. Hamp Blevins pitched out of the saddle, a bullet in his brain. John Paine snapped off a shot at Jim Tewksbury, then tumbled to the ground as his horse collapsed from a gunshot. Jim Roberts triggered a rifle bullet that clipped off Paine's ear. The Texan scrambled to his feet and tried to sprint away, but Jim Tewksbury felled him with another rifle slug.

Bob Gillespie was wounded in the buttocks as he spurred away from the cabin, while Bob Carrington was struck in the right arm and right leg. Tom Tucker caught a bullet under the left arm which tore out through his other armpit. Five of the eight riders had been hit by the fusillade, and two were dead. The survivors galloped away.

Tom Tucker soon toppled off his horse and passed out. During the night he was roused by a chilling rain and hailstorm, and he crawled for a couple of hours while blowflies and maggots worked on his wound. Finally he reached the cabin of Bob Sigsby, who soaked the wound with creosote dip. Tucker stayed with Sigsby until his wound healed, then he rode out of Pleasant Valley under the cover of darkness.

Tucker and Bob Gillespie eventually reunited and returned to the Hash Knife together, Gillespie sitting his saddle sideways in deference to his hip wound. The two wounded warriors stayed with their old outfit just one night, heading out at dawn for New Mexico. "When I crossed the line into New Mexico," reminisced Tucker, "I headed for the old Rio Grande and never again had any hankering to see Arizona."

Back in Pleasant Valley the war raged on for six weeks. The Tewksburys, with only a handful of fighting men to counter large numbers of Graham riders and sheriff's posses, took to the wilderness and skillfully engaged in guerrilla warfare. There were ambushes and sieges and open fights and at least two dozen casualties. But more men were shot on August 10, 1887, than on any other single day of the Pleasant Valley War.

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Trails Grown Dim

Hulse

I am seeking any information I can get on the following members of the Hulse family or their descendants. The Hulses all were born in Ohio. Elam Hulse, born June 28, 1828. Ethan Alan Brown Hulse, born March 25, 1838. Eliab Hulse, born December 9, 1832. Ezariah Hulse, born June 8, 1826, and married Amanda E. Bunt on October 20, 1864, in Bethany, Harrison County, Missouri. Maria Hulse Reid, born February 15, 1835, married Alexander Abraham Reid on July 19, 1854, also at Bethany, Missouri.

The Hulse family had settled at Bethany sometime before 1846. Maria and Abraham were supposed to have gone to Washington State to live; their children were George S., Charles S., and Armstad B.—**Joann Shunk, 4546 Riverside Drive, Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan 49783.**

Sharp-Houston

I am looking for information on my grandparents. William Wert Sharp was born in Dubuque, Iowa, June 5, 1861. Elizabeth Loretta Houston was born January 10, 1866, in Coggon, Iowa. I understand that she was related to Sam Houston. William and Elizabeth both attended college in Epworth, Iowa, in the early 1880s. They were married September 11, 1888. I would appreciate any knowledge of who their parents and grandparents were.—**Robert L. Sharp, 13219 N.E. Prairie Road, Brush Prairie, Washington 98606.**

Stephens-Hollis

I am seeking information on my Stephens and Hollis ancestors. What I know about them so far is sketchy.

My grandfather, Charles Emitt Stephens, was born in Oklahoma on an unknown date and died in Butte, Montana, in May 1949. He had one sister, name unknown, who also lived in Butte.

He married Emma Lizza Hollis. The date and place of her birth are unknown. She died in November 1971 at Oroville, California. Emma had two brothers that I know of, Frank and Ira Hollis. Frank's last known place of residence was Napa, California.

Charles and Emma had two children, Delbert Emitt, born August 31, 1918, and died July 11, 1972; and Julia Ruth, born January 21, 1927.

I would greatly appreciate any information on the Stephens and Hollis families, good or bad, and I would be happy to hear from any of their descendants.—**Dixie Stephens McMaster, 24435 Highway 96, Klamath River, California 96050.**

Vines

I am trying to locate information on Lester Wilburn Vines. He was born in 1856, exact date and place unknown. The last word of him was around 1910–12. He was born in Douglas County, Missouri. He had three sons—Charles, William Henry, and Sam—and two daughters—Betty and Alice.

Lester married Cendy Pruit or Collins. She was killed in a bar fight in Las Vegas about 1900. Any information will be greatly appreciated.—**Walter Vines, 129 Chevy Chase Court, Fairfield, California 94533.**

Stewart

I am a historical researcher at Shaker Village in Canterbury, New Hampshire, a restored Shaker community and one of the last two sites where Shakers still live. I am interested in corresponding with anyone, particularly descendants, who possesses information about Daniel Stewart, a former Shaker boy who went west and became a prominent pioneer and businessman in Walla Walla, Washington. He was born April 25, 1825, in Cardington, Morrow County, Ohio, a son of William and Patient (Denton) Stewart. The family later became

Readers' letters for "Trails Grown Dim" are printed as soon as space permits, so please be patient. Please type or print your query and limit letters to 150 words or less. Photos are welcome. We can't run current "missing persons" notices or lengthy genealogical requests, but we do attempt to print all letters as soon as we can. Any reader having information concerning persons referred to above is asked to communicate directly with the letter writer; please do not write to us.

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members of the Shaker (*not* Quaker, as is sometimes recorded in biographical accounts of Stewart) village at Union Village, Ohio. I am particularly interested in any dealings with Indians Stewart may have had and in his political activities and career in the Oregon legislature.

I am also interested in corresponding with anyone who has any information about artist Arthur Dowe of San Francisco. He was a fascinating character who was a portrait painter, inventor, writer, investigator of all kinds of religions and philosophies, and for a time, a Shaker. He was born March 9, 1854, in Yorktown, Illinois. I am particularly interested in any contact he may have had with Indians.—**Darryl Thompson, Shaker Village, Canterbury, New Hampshire 03224.**

McCarty-Holtzman-White

We are looking for descendants of Nancy E. (McCarty) Holtzman and James McCarty. They were the daughter and son of William McCarty, who died in Elyton (Birmingham), Jefferson County, Alabama, in 1864. Nancy McCarty had two daughters, Mary Jane and Ann Eliza. They were both married in Pulaski County, Arkansas, in 1870. Mary Jane married William White; their two sons, George and William, were listed in the 1870 census. At the time of the census, Ann Eliza was still unmarried, eighteen years old, and living with William and Mary White.

James McCarty was also in Pulaski County in 1868 and 1870. He was married to a woman from Tennessee named Nancy, who we think died in the late 1860s. James came through Van Zandt County, Texas, to see his brothers, Dr. Early McCarty of Acton, Texas; Dr. Ben F. McCarty of Comanche, Texas; and Thompson. James died in Acton in 1888 and is buried in the Acton cemetery. We have not had any contact with either family after that date.—**A.J. McCarty, Route One, Box 260, Canton, Texas 75103.**

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A New Look at America's Southern Border

BORDER: THE U.S.-MEXICO LINE. *By Leon C. Metz. Mangan Books, 6245 Snowheights Court, El Paso, Texas 79912. $29.95 cloth bound.*

The border between the United States and Mexico stretches for 1,951.36 miles from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. The border was established by the Mexican War, 1846–48, but its exact route remained a source of contention between the two countries until the "Treaty With Mexico Resolving Boundary Differences" was signed on November 20, 1970. Many Americans called that treaty "The Kennedy Give-Away."

It took historian Leon C. Metz fifteen years of research to trace the border's story from America's early westward expansion to today's problems of water rights, pollution, immigration, illegal aliens, smuggling, and drugs. The narrative does a remarkable job of bringing the participants in the long and complicated history to life.

During the initial survey, members of the boundary commission engaged in petty squabbles with each other. After the party rescued Inez Gonzáles from Comancheros, Commissioner John R. Bartlett became so enchanted with the mature fifteen-year-old Mexican beauty that he took an eighty-mile detour into Mexico "to see Miss Inez home." The next time he came across Inez she was "living in sin" with a Mexican officer, and Bartlett's efforts to terminate the relationship failed.

The history chronicles the negotiation of the Gadsden Purchase, which provided the United States with a southern railroad route to the Pacific Coast and brought New Mexico's Santa Rita copper mines north of the border. Accounts of the activities of filibusters along the border illustrate little-known pages of American history. Indian troubles continued to plague relations along the border until almost the turn of the century.

During the Mexican Revolution, *Villistas* murdered sixteen American mining engineers in Chihuahua, and El Pasoans reacted by indiscriminately beating Hispanics in the streets. Pancho Villa responded by invading the United States and ravaging Columbus, New Mexico. Gen. John J. Pershing then mounted an abortive punitive expedition into Mexico. A song called "Tipperary" summed up the expedition's troubles:

We started to the border and we charged to Parral,
We were after Pancho Villa and Lopez his old pal;
Our horses were starved and dying;
We lived on parched corn.
Oh, it's damn hard living in Chihuahua,
Where Villa was born.

Mexican peons have long viewed the United States as a promised land with streets paved in gold; this has combined with American farmers looking upon Mexico as a pool of cheap agricultural labor to generate a long succession of problems with illegal aliens. Smuggling

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has always presented difficulties along the border and, more recently, drug traffic has introduced aggravating issues for officials on both sides of the line. Metz writes, "Even without federal interference, neighboring cities seem uncertain and edgy when officially dealing with one another. It is not unusual for elected officers to be unfamiliar with the other's language. Politicians and business leaders tend to approach discussions as if negotiating with an antagonistic foreign potentate, instead of a friend who lives next door."

This handsome, 468-page volume gives a comprehensive, well-documented picture of activities which have led to the present often uneasy truce between the United States and Mexico. It is sprinkled with illustrations and informative maps. For a student of the Southwest and U.S.-Mexican relations, the comprehensive bibliography is worth the price of the book.

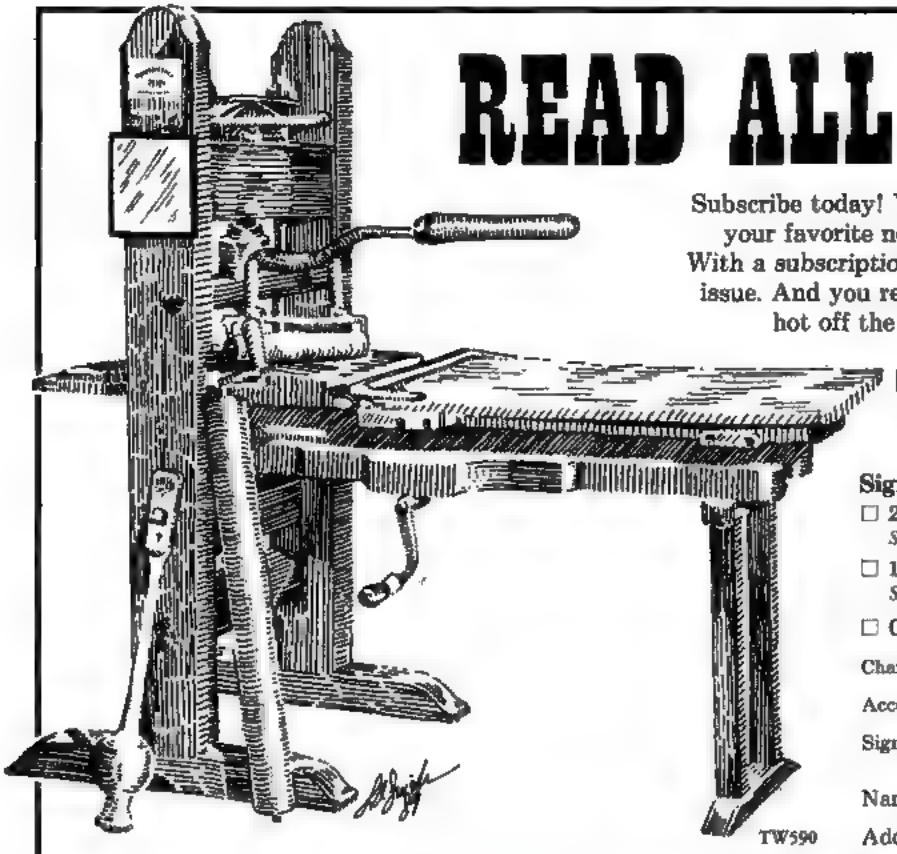
Leon C. Metz has authored nine books and numerous articles in magazines, newspapers, and historical journals. He is past president of Western Writers of America and was honored by that organization in 1985 with the prestigious Saddleman Award for his overall contribution to interest in Western writing.—*Francis L. Fugate, El Paso, Texas.*

A Suburb of Hell

DEATH VALLEY LORE: CLASSIC TALES OF FANTASY, ADVENTURE AND MYSTERY. *Edited by Richard E. Lingenfelter and Richard A. Dwyer. University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada 89557-0076. $24.95 cloth bound.*

This excellent volume, an introduction to Death Valley lore, is probably a spin-off from Lingenfelter's research for his recent and well-received *Death Valley and the Amargosa*, now in paperback reprint from the University of California Press. With his coauthor, he has selected a variety of accounts of Death Valley, most of them obscure. The one familiar piece is an excerpt from William Manly's *Death Valley in '49*. Manly was not only the region's greatest hero, he was a fine natural writer to boot. (The companion piece by fellow forty-niner John Brier is, in contrast, stiff and overwritten.) The second-best chapter is also by Manly, an unfamiliar description of his return to Death Valley in the 1860s to help look for the lost Alvord Mine.

Other good writers include J. Ross Browne, describing "lost ledges" like the mysterious Gunsight, Alvord, and Breyfogle strikes, all of them chimerical, and—of all people!—Shorty Harris, the epitome of single-blanket prospectors



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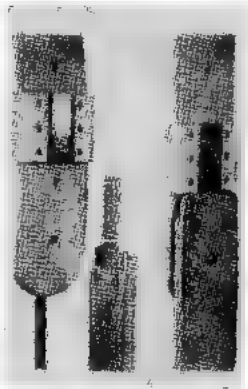

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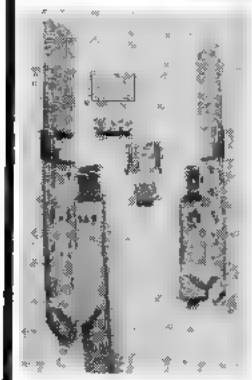

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Some of the selections are slight, like the 1874 newspaperman's description of the valley as a veritable suburb of hell, or the accounts of the first crossings of the arid area by auto (1906) and motorcycle (1913). But they serve to point out how the legend of exaggerated heat, thirst, and death has plagued this fascinating hunk of California landscape for years.

After the forty-niners and the bona fide miners of gold, silver, and borax came the con men, especially Death Valley Scotty, and the wags. The latter took advantage of the valley's nasty reputation in order to pen some delightful tongue-in-cheek hoaxes like the Amargosa River's canteen fish and the sad fate of the inventor of "solar armor." Suited up, he froze to death in the middle of Death Valley in June 1874.—*Richard Dillon, Mill Valley, California.*

The Trail That Changed America

THE SANTA FE TRAIL REVISITED. *By Gregory M. Franzwa. The Patrice Press, 1701 S. Eighth Street, St. Louis, Missouri 63104. $12.95 paper bound.*

MAPS OF THE SANTA FE TRAIL. *By Gregory M. Franzwa. The Patrice Press. $24.95 cloth bound; $29.95 looseleaf binder.*

Anyone interested in Western American history will enjoy *The Santa Fe Trail Revisited* and *Maps of the Santa Fe Trail.* These companion volumes are driving guides for contemporary cross-country adventurers who want to retrace the famous Santa Fe Trail from Missouri across Kansas, the Oklahoma panhandle, and southern Colorado to New Mexico. In these Santa Fe volumes Franzwa follows the format and design of his earlier, excellent *The Oregon Trail Revisited* and *Maps of the Oregon Trail.*

Santa Fe Trail Revisited provides detailed directions for the route of the Santa Fe Trail and on how to find the trail and many of its historic sites. *Santa Fe Trail Revisited* begins in Old Franklin, Missouri. The crucial aspect of any guide is that its directions be easily understood, and Franzwa's route from Boonville to Arrow Rock is an example of his clarity: "From Boonville proceed west on I-70 for 5.3 miles to the Highway 41 exit and follow the signs about fourteen miles to Arrow Rock." Even allowing the distractions of a carload of children and a dog, a modern motorist could easily follow these directions, and Franzwa gives similarly precise directions for the entire route. Having personally followed part of the Santa Fe Trail, I can confirm the precision of his directions in *Santa Fe Trail Revisited.*

Good maps are essential to trail study, and Franzwa provides an excellent set in *Maps of the Santa Fe Trail.* To compile this set of maps, Franzwa first consulted the Government Land Office (GLO) 1850s map survey of Kansas. The GLO maps are quite accurate, and they delineate the Santa Fe Trail and its variant routes. Franzwa then turned to the 7.5 minute United States Geological Survey (USGS) quad maps. Utilizing aerial photographs done in the 1930s when the trail was still quite visible from the air, the USGS quad maps are a reliable cross-check against the GLO maps. Synthesizing his research, Franzwa then used county-by-county maps published by the highway departments of the respective trail states as his base maps for *Maps of the Santa Fe Trail.* Franzwa marked the trail route in red on the base maps. The map volume is available as either a bound book or in a looseleaf folder.

Historic travel routes like the Santa Fe Trail or the Oregon Trail are more than wagon ruts on the landscape. They are spatial, geographic artifacts that witnessed a diverse history, and one certainly senses this on the Santa Fe Trail. The trail held a different significance for the traders who first ventured west from Missouri than it did for the Hispanic population of New Mexico. The Santa Fe Trail held still other implications for the Native Americans along its route. For them it meant disruption of game populations, more outsiders traveling across and eventually into their land, and change in their indigenous economic trading patterns. The Santa Fe Trail heightened American awareness of the Southwest, which led to the United States' war with Mexico. Acquisition of the Southwest eventually precipitated a political crisis over the extension of slavery into the West that resulted in the Civil War. As you follow Gregory Franzwa's guidebooks to Santa Fe you should occasionally pause and ponder this old historic artery that linked Midwest to Southwest and so profoundly affected our history.—*Joseph C. Porter, Omaha, Nebraska.*

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Frenchy

Photo Courtesy of Cal Farley's Boys Ranch

Elizabeth "Frenchy" McCormick.

Elizabeth took the stagecoach west to Dodge City Kansas, where trail drivers and cowboys from Texas were anxious to spend their hard earned money in the gambling dens and dance halls. In Dodge City some cowboy said he wanted to dance with "Frenchy," and the name stuck.

By TOM BEAN

Frenchy McCormick was secretive about her name, age, and place of birth. She was a beautiful Irish girl with blue eyes and dark hair. She was born Elizabeth McGraw near Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where she learned to speak French as well as English. Her mother died when Frenchy was small and her father, a Mississippi riverboat captain with a run from New Orleans to St. Louis, put Frenchy in a Catholic orphanage. There she got all the schooling she ever had and learned to write a beautiful hand.

When she was fifteen years old, Elizabeth ran away from the orphanage and joined her father on his boat. She loved to dance and frequented dance halls, which displeased her father. When she got to St. Louis on one trip, she abandoned the boat and appeared on the stage in a burlesque show. Her father got the law to stop her since a burlesque theater was no place for a fifteen-year-old girl.

Elizabeth was a headstrong girl. She soon took the stagecoach west and landed in Dodge City, Kansas, where trail drivers and cowboys from Texas were anxious to spend their hard-earned money in the gambling dens and dance halls. It was in Dodge City that some cowboy said that he wanted to dance with "Frenchy." From then on she went by that name in all the dance halls, and she became one of the golden girls of the West.

Where Frenchy went or where she danced for the next thirteen years is not known. In 1880 she met Mickey McCormick, who had a thriving livery stable in Old Tascosa, the main trading post in the ten most northerly counties of the Texas panhandle. Tascosa was the seat of the recently organized Oldham County. Mickey was on a trip taking a client to Mobeetie in Wheeler County about one hundred miles east. Fort Elliott just outside of Mobeetie had a large dance hall for the entertainment of soldiers and civilians. Mickey McCormick went to the dance hall for an evening of fun. There he met Frenchy, and it was a case of love at first sight.

That was the beginning of one of the great love stories of the West. When Mickey returned to Tascosa he took

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Frenchy with him. He built her an adobe house in the best part of town.

Tascosa was a wild and woolly gambling town. It seemed that everyone visited its gambling halls. Mickey had some gambling rooms at the back of his livery stable building in "Hog Town" where the rougher element hung out. Frenchy danced with them all and gambled with them all, but it was well understood that she was Mickey's woman. They were a handsome couple, and their romance was the talk of the town. Frenchy helped run the gambling tables, and became very adept at dealing cards.

Scotty called in all the gamblers, cowboys, and dance hall girls who were shacking up and told them that they were violating the law. They could get married or be prosecuted. Mickey and Frenchy were two of the first to heed Scotty's warning. Scotty performed their marriage ceremony.

Frenchy and Mickey's relationship was destined to change when Alexander "Scotty" Wilson was elected Tascosa's first justice of the peace. Scotty's courtroom was in his restaurant saloon; from behind the bar he handed down both drinks and justice. Scotty was not long in recognizing that there was profit in politics. He was a judge not to be trifled with. Once when he fined a cowboy two hundred dollars for disturbing the peace, the cowboy stood up in court and said, "I ain't gonna pay it. I will appeal to a higher court."

Old Scotty said, "Sit down, you son-of-a-bitch, there ain't no higher court."

Scotty called in all the gamblers, cowboys, and dance hall girls who were shacking up and told them that they were violating the law. They could get married or be prosecuted. Mickey and Frenchy were two of the first to heed Scotty's warning. Scotty performed their marriage ceremony. They were later married again by a Catholic priest. On the marriage license, Frenchy gave her name as Elizabeth McGraw and her year of birth as 1852. Mickey never called her anything other than Elizabeth.

Tascosa was booming. In its initial issue, June 12, 1886, the weekly Tascosa *Pioneer* reported on the various businesses in town. It noted, "Michael McCormick's livery and feed stable is a business that is paying and popular. It is the only establishment of that kind here. It has comfortable stalls, good teams and vehicles, and polite attention to his customers has won 'Mickey,' as he is popularly called, an enviable run of patronage."

In 1887 the railroad being built from Fort Worth, Texas, to Denver, Colorado, had reached Childress, Texas, about one hundred and thirty miles southeast of Tascosa. It was generally believed that the railroad would cross the Canadian River at Tascosa. The townspeople were jubilant. When the railroad bypassed Tascosa, however, the people's jubilation turned to dismay. They could see the beginning of the end of their town. The next blow came when the Rock Island Railroad built a line from Amarillo to Tucumcari, New Mexico. It passed through southern Oldham County where the towns of Vega and Adrian sprang up. Tascosa lost the county seat to Vega.

Mickey McCormick's health had been failing for some time. He sold the livery stable at a great loss and tried to make a living hunting wild game around Tascosa, dressing the meat, and selling it. He died in 1912.

Tascosa became a ghost town; Frenchy was its last resident.

Clarence Sparks was a cowboy on the Bivins ranch in the 1930s. In making his rounds, he would stop and check on Frenchy, who was getting old and still living alone. Clarence later worked for the Matador ranch as camp man at Turtle Hole camp in Motley County. He was our neighbor for several years. He told us that Oldham County, the Bivins ranch, and other interested friends saw that Frenchy had groceries and medicine, but no one could prevail on her to move where she could be more comfortable. She was living in the old two-room adobe that Mickey had built for her so long ago, without gas, electricity, or telephone, and drawing water from a well at the corner of the house. She was determined to stay there until the end and to be buried by Mickey's side.

Frenchy liked to tell Clarence about Old Tascosa, and Mickey's part in its history. She spoke of him as if he were still living. She said that when Mickey gambled he thought her presence in the room brought him luck. If there were

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Photo Courtesy of Cal Farley's Boys Ranch

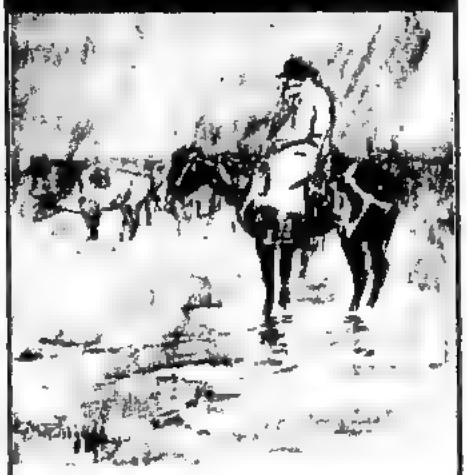
Frenchy was buried at Tascosa beside her beloved Mickey.

another woman in the room when Mickey hit a losing streak, Frenchy would ask the woman to leave, as she thought the woman was the cause of Mickey's losing streak. One thing that Frenchy never mentioned to Clarence or anyone else (except probably Mickey) was her life before coming to Tascosa. She would not respond to questions about her life, and she was once heard to remark, "No one will ever find out who I am."

Frenchy predicted many times, "This town will come back someday." Her prediction came true, but not like she thought it would. In 1939 Julian Bivins, who had purchased the old stone courthouse, gave it to Cal Farley's Boys Ranch, which today is a wonderful home for underprivileged boys.

That same year Frenchy finally agreed to move to Channing, twenty miles away, and live with one of her friends, Mrs. Lona Blackwell, who assured Frenchy that her wish to be buried by Mickey's side in Old Tascosa would be carried out. If Frenchy outlived Mrs. Blackwell, Mrs. Blackwell assured Frenchy that others also would respect her wishes to be buried by Mickey's side. Mrs. Blackwell also assured Frenchy that she would take her to visit Old Tascosa often.

Frenchy was content to live with Mrs. Blackwell and often expressed her appreciation for the fine meals Mrs. Blackwell prepared. Frenchy died in her sleep, January 12, 1941, two years after moving to Channing. As Mrs. Blackwell had assured her she would be, she is buried beside Mickey.



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July 9	Oct. 1990	Sept. 1 - Oct. 1
Aug. 9	Nov. 1990	Oct. 1 - Nov. 1
Sep. 9	Dec. 1990	Nov. 1 - Dec. 1
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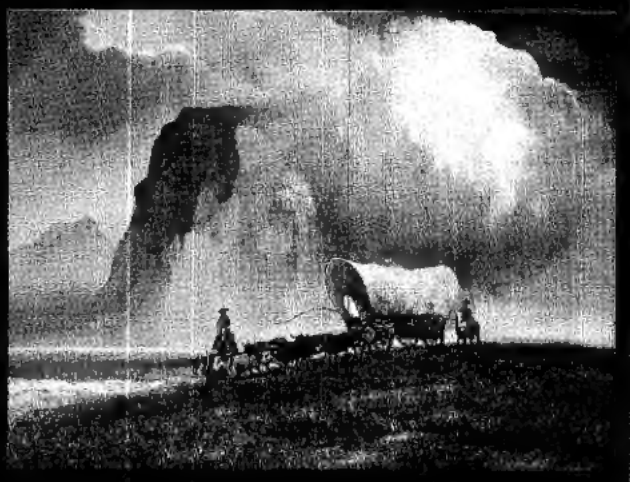
The acknowledged dean of Arizona artists, Hal Empie has painted scenes from his native state for sixty years. His brilliant use of color and his impressionist brush work combine to capture the essence of a bygone era. Western Graphics proudly offers three of Hal Empie's most popular prints in fine, unlimited editions, hand-signed by the artist. Each print features archival standard, acid free paper and is sized to fit standard frames. Purchase our Hal Empie prints individually or as a set—and save!

"Gettin' a Mite Chilly"
11 x 14 image • 16 x 20 overall
originally appeared on the
cover of TRUE WEST, March 1988
$22.50 postpaid



"The Last Wagon"
14 x 18 image • 18 x 24 overall
originally appeared on the
cover of OLD WEST, Summer 1985
$22.50 postpaid

"Tonite Let It Be Lonebrow"
14 x 18 image • 18 x 24 overall
originally appeared on the
cover of OLD WEST, Fall 1984
$22.50 postpaid

$22.50 each

$49.95/set
postage paid

Empie

Send me the following prints. I understand that if I am dissatisfied for any reason with a Western Graphics print, I may return it in saleable condition within 15 days for a full refund.

Qty.	Description	Price Each	Total
_____	"Gettin' A Mite Chilly" — 16" x 20" overall size	$22.50	$_____
_____	"The Last Wagon" — 18" x 24" overall size	$22.50	$_____
_____	"Tonite Let It Be Lonebrow" — 18" x 24" overall size	$22.50	$_____
_____	**Set of All Three Prints — Save!**	$49.95	$_____
	Total (postpaid)		$_____

☐ My check/money order is enclosed in the amount of $_____.
Charge to my ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard Card # _____
Expiration Date _____ Signature (charges only) _____
Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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